House of Spades

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House of Spades

by 222quinn

Summary

The summer before his last year in school Alex Forbes is sent on trip across the U.K and some parts of Europe accumulating skills in which his father says are necessary.

He's two weeks in Wales when he's told he will be heading to Scotland and this time he wouldn't be without company.

Some of children of his father's society are there, all in this one Manor without any parental supervision — a recipe for disaster.

Alex is given little choice with regards to befriending these teenagers. They are all sort of odd in their own way, one in particular — a boy with chilling, ice blue eyes, a brooding frown and a morbid fascination for all things dead.

It is their fathers wishes they become friends, allies.

Joining the House of Spades Alex is given two choices either bend or break to fit the role given by Nigel Colbie — the Jack of Spades.

Chapter 1: Act I - The Manor

The scariest monsters are the ones that lurk within our souls.

— Edgar Allan Poe —

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Chapter 2: ace of diamonds ♦

Chapter Notes

> This story was a the equivalent of an earworm. I couldn't stop thinking about the first scene of this following chapter. And I ended up writing and writing until my fingers got cramped and it's been two weeks (more or less) and it's insane what the mind does when you're hyper-fixated.
>
> Please note the following story is canon divergence, we will meet characters from the movie but the story takes a different route entirely.
>
> It's basically a what if and all the OCs are mines from a story I've been writing since I was fourteen so in other words as much as this is a 'Like minds' fanfic it's also fanfic for my own story (?) hahaha ~ *nervous laughter* (I was bored okay don't judge).
>
> If you've read novels like Secret History and If We were Villains you know the vibes you're in for.
>
> Please be kind, read the tags and do enjoy, thank you :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There was a quiet, solemn peace within the fresh, misty air and soft grey clouds and the dew wet grass of the calm, mesmerizing Welsh landscape.

Alex Frobes stood on top of the hill, holding out his shotgun aiming steadily, waiting. He pulled the trigger, the gun carrying his shoulders back, he managed to brace himself properly as the bullet lands the target and the duck plummets from the sky.

The barking of the twin hounds ran through the field of grass, going down hill into the forest in search of the game.

Josh whistled, "Nice shot." He sat there underneath a tree on the higher point of the hill, on a gaint root merging from the soil, his gun bracing against the truck. He was picking the grass from the field, his hands and finger nails covered in some dirt.

Alex said nothing, simply watching as the two English Spaniel came running, the twins as he liked to call them — Artemis and Apollo.

They were names he gave them for the way their fur coats were, the female a white, almost silver coat and the male, a sunkiss golden brown.

Alex smiled as Artemis came dashing towards him with the game, she held it out as graciously and obediently as a dog would and he took it from her, allowing her to kiss and nibble his face, this cause Apollo to get jealous and pushed his way in for kisses and pets too. Alex chuckled under his breath, the misty air escaping his lips. The sun is barely out, it was still chilly but he liked it this way cause he got to reflect and think.

"Something on your mind?"

Josh was always good at knowing if something was bothering him. Alex turned looking at him over his shoulder as he petted his dogs. "I've received a letter from my father. He wants me to go to Scotland."

Josh frowned, "Whatever for?"

Alex turned back to look at his dogs, "I don't know. First he sends me to Germany, then to Italy, then to Ireland and then here in Wales and now... he wants me in Scotland." Alex felt his lips twisting in mocking smile, "I feel like I'm a show dog, bred to just perform for claps."

Josh considered his words, "You think it's about his club?"

"Oh I *know* it is and I know you would get to go too with me if your parents premits it and my father allows it."

"So what am I to do here then?" Josh gestured around the empty field, "I only came here because of you."

Alex stood up, "I never asked you to come though."

Josh shrugged, "You didn't have to. That phone call was enough to tell me you were desperate for a friend and Raj is off in Sydney, god knows what the fuck he's doing there — *without* his parents I might add, so you and I are stuck with each other again."

"So you'll come to Scotland with me?"

Josh shrugged again, "Like you said if your dad allows it."

Alex frowned. Right of course, how quick he was to forget his father's approval was needed. It was partly why Josh was allowed here in

Wales with him his father could've easily had said no but at least he showed some mercy then.

Perhaps this time he would but that was not the case for this trip as they went back to the country house, the maid declared his father was in the studies of the office. The fact that this home wasn't even his and he used it as he please just didn't sit right with Alex but he supposed it was nice to have rich, privileged friends. Alex wondered which of his rich, well connected allies owned fifteen arces of such an esteem estate here in the middle of nowhere in the heart of Wales luscious open forest valley.

He actually liked it here more than every other place he was told to go.

Here he pretended he was some heir to some noble house, a prince with servants whom kept his company as he waited for his father — *the king* — to come home from the fight of whatever war that was taking place.

But then he recalled sourly it was the King that stays home while the son fights the battles for him.

Alex twisted the knob, pushing the door open and seeing his father standing there and another man. He goes still for a second surprised to find another person in the office when he was told it was just his father.

Ian Forbes stood there, shoulders tense and straight, his expression cold and hard as always. "Alex my boy, this is a friend of mines, John Colbie."

The man held out his hand with a smile and Alex shook his, "Pleasure to met you sir."

Mr. Colbie laughed, "*Sir*? Such a respectful fellow you have coming up there, Ian."

"Yes," his father replied, though his expression seemed more along the lines of grimly disappointment, his father was never one to smile.

"John here is the man who you've been staying by," he explained to Alex who already deduced that already. "Thank you by the way I was afraid to leave him home alone."

So you chose to leave me home alone in the middle of nowhere in some

rich estate, thank you I suppose.

But Alex knew why he did it, simply because his father deemed his life important, to not to be wasted. Those trips even this one here in Wales was training, educational in some ways, he's learnt a lot from what he's seen, the people he's meet and even the calmness of just being alone which itself was hellish until boredom causes one to learn how to ride a horse, how to chop lumber, and how to fire a gun.

And even though Alex *had* been alone in company, he knew someone was there keeping an eye on him. Whether it was the maid and butler here or the hotel staff in Italy or the old lady who's apartment he was staying by in Ireland, all of it he had someone looking, making sure he was in simplest terms alright.

Josh was surprisely a great gift and the two had a wild time doing absolute nonsense and the summer was actually beginning to become fun until now.

"Alex..."

Alex blinked, "I'm sorry what?"

His father frown deepened, "I was telling you to pack your things. We are to leave tonight for Scotland."

"Is Josh coming?"

"No."

"Why?"

His father chose not to answer it and John spoke up, "If you are worried you'll be alone, don't worry my son will be there. It is only for these few weeks perhaps days."

Alex wanted to ask more, wanted to protest. He rather not go and make friends with some uptight pretentious prick who frankly — he could already imagine — would be dull company anyways.

"Yes your son is there too, how is he?"

"Oh quite well, I thought bringing him out of his hobbies would be great for his mind, let him see the rest of the children of the Order."

Alex had the urge to roll his eyes, he could give zero fucks about this stupid club his father was in.

The two men look ready to be swept away in deep conversation that Alex quickly and very politely as possible excused himself. John simply smiled and waved him good bye, "It was nice seeing you my boy."

"Likewise sir."

Alex locked eyes with his father before leaving the room, those same cold, hardened gaze with nothing but sheer grimly disappointment.

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At least Alex had gotten his dogs to come along the trip though it took much convincing from his father to allow them.

It was Mr.Colbie who actually encouraged them to come along saying, "Nigel is carrying his own too."

Well that is comforting enough, Alex thought. He had a dog which is enough to work with in conversation.

He shook his head at he thought of this, he would not be burden with befriending this guy, whoever he was. He will keep to himself as a form of protest to his father for allowing Josh to be sent back home while leaving Alex in yet another large estate that probably belonged to another wealthy member of this secret society.

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Arriving the Manor was done by taxi, his father only carried him half way to the point of Glasgow Airport before handing him over to the

driver with a paper of the address to where they needed to go and a phone number for Alex to call him (which Alex knew wouldn't work cause it never did).

The driver was given clear instructions to not to go any other routes or make any stops unless absolutely necessary. His father as he spoke glanced across at Alex as he knew his son was mischievous even if he tended to play the role of obedient, loyal and good-natured son to public eyes.

The driver simply nodded, understanding immediately, he headed to the driver's side as he waited for Alex and Ian Frobes to talk.

"How long are you going to have me going on these trips for the summer?"

His father squared his shoulders, hands in the pockets of his long coat. "Have you not enjoyed yourself?"

Alex gave no sort of answer and Ian only nodded, looking at the road up ahead, "This will be the last. You'll head back home and prepare for school after this is over, review all your notes and do extra readings."

"I've done enough reading these days."

"Do more."

And his father rested his hand on his shoulder, the only form of a loving gesture Alex could ever remember him doing before he turned away.

The drive took about three hours, Alex grew insanely restless and impatient.

The endless curvy road outstretching long and far on the vast landscape of the Scottish Highlands.

If he wasn't car sick and bored he would've enjoyed the view.

Alex had slept away when they finally arrived, the knocking on the window woke him up as the driver already had his suitcase out and holding an umbrella open to cover him from the rain.

Alex nearly stumbled on his legs cause of how tired they were cooped up in the back seat, he finally felt the oxygen going up to his brain as

the smell of the rich clean air with the hint of rain and fresh grass wash over his nauseated state.

He muttered a thank you to the driver, giving him the money he owed him and even a tip cause he felt bad the man had to drive all the way back home alone on the empty road and it was nearing night.

The driver smiled and tipped his hat, "Thank you young sir. Have a nice holiday."

Alex pulled his suitcase, "Oh I'll try."

The driver waited till he goes into the Manor before taking the umbrella back from him and dashing back to the cab and heading off once again.

Inside was an empty hallway, just the simple sound of his suitcase on the polished wooden floor was enough to be echoed all around the Manor.

Suddenly Alex heard the sound of dogs, he braced himself to be attacked but saw — to his surprise — Artemis and Apollo running towards him. "Oh my sweet angels come here," he held out his hands and the two dogs threw themselves on him, licking his face, sniffing and barking happily at him. He lay there on the floor chuckling to himself, taking all the love they gave.

"They know their owner that's for certain."

Alex hadn't even realized he was being watched when he looked up to see a tall boy there standing, his blonde hair long touching his shoulder, combed neatly behind his ear.

In his hand he carried a book 'Great Expectations', he wore a simple a brown sweater vest that was over a white shirt, the sleeves pushed to his elbows. He leaned against the hall post, watching with careful bright blue eyes before giving Alex a confident grin, "You must be Alex."

He closed in the space between them holding out his hand, "I'm Lionel Anderson."

Alex frowned. Did he hear correct? His father didn't mention there will be more children his age – well not his age entirely the boy in front of him looked seventeen or possibly eighteen or nineteen but he's around the same age as Alex and that is all that mattered and he

wasn't Mr. Colbie's son so this was all surprising.

Lionel saw his delay taking his hand for a shake as a sign of hostility and pressed his lips tightly together dropping it back to his side. "I get it, you don't want to be friendly with me or anyone here to begin with seeing you were stuck here by your parents while they were out doing god knows what with their stupid secret club." Lionel rolled his eyes before stooping down meeting Alex face to face, looking intently at him.

"Guess what," he whispered, his bright blue eyes piercing Alex's, "We all don't want to be here, so either you find your own way about here alone or stuck it up and be friends."

Alex frowned at him, the dogs started growling at Lionel now before he turned his attention to them and suddenly they were quiet, obedient and their eyes were averted to the floor and Alex had never seen something like that happen before, so powerful and it was terrifying but also he felt a sudden envy there and he wanted such power, crave it.

"Alex," he finally said when Lionel was getting up to leave.

Lionel looked at him carefully watching as he nervously pushed himself up from the floor, the dogs standing at each side of him, "My name's Alex Frobes."

Lionel tilted his head, "The Headmaster's son, right?"

"Yeah that's my dad, you go to the same school, I've never seen you before?"

Lionel's blue eyes take him in carefully, "It's a big school, I'm afraid though I spent most years in and out of it because of my own issues." And suddenly he's rolling down his sleeves as if he just remembered something. Alex hadn't even noticed the red marks until Lionel was hiding them.

"There's many rooms available on the right wing of the Manor, you can go there and choose one then you can join us at the back under the patio, there's a pool and my brother in his absolute confidence is making dinner in the kitchen."

"How many are there?"

Lionel was counting in his head, doing the math before shrugging, "Six

of us now, including you." He rest his hand on Alex's shoulder, "I hope to see you at the pool."

Alex suddenly felt nervous once again, he slowly nodded, intimidated by the way Lionel was looking at him, like a lion stalking it's prey but he also didn't mind and he's found himself listening to his directions, going to the right wing and finding a room which he liked, resting his suitcase on the bed not even bothering to unpack.

His dogs followed him around as he held out a treat for them, licking his fingers as he went to find the back of the Manor which was hard considering how huge the home was and it seemed there were many back doors and possibly many side ones too.

Alex instead stumbled to the back where the stables were and he's startled seeing horses staring at him, all caged behind their own stalls, one – a clydesdale breed – huffed and shook his mane at him. He chuckled, approaching the fella with his hands out when he heard a voice, "Don't touch him."

He flinched, turning back to see a girl standing there in riding gear, she glared at him, walking up and pushing her finger into his shoulder, "How the hell did you get onto this property, this is private ground, who the fuck —"

"Lizzy, his father is Ian Frobes. He belongs here."

Alex heard the voice, quiet, distinct and he turned and he saw in the corner of the stables — with a sketch pad — a strange pale boy sitting there on the pile of hay. He wore a long dark overcoat, his raven black hair a bit damp, he looked like a wet cat in that corner. He realized the boy's gaze never looked up at them as his pencils just kept moving.

Alex went still as the girl stood there next to him frowning, then she turned to him with a scowl, "You're Ian's son?"

"Uh yes..."

She wasn't pretty so to say neither was she plain-looking; Alex figured it was probably how she made herself appear, her brown hair wasn't exciting, just braided and dry, her brown eyes held no feminine kindness, just the rage instead and she scowled like it was the only thing she knew how to do. "He's my godfather, did you know that?"

Alex shook his head, "No, I didn't."

The boy was suddenly smirking, "That makes the two of you brother and sister through the eyes of our Lord God."

Lizzy turned and shot the boy a glare before pushing Alex away to go to the horse behind him. "Whatever, I'm in no mood to deal with any of you." She opened up the pen of the clydesdale horse, went in and started fixing the saddle and reins, the horse sweetly nuzzled at her and she's tiny compared to the creature, she could've fell if she hadn't held her ground. After she was done she mounted the horse without a moment of hesitation goes galloping out of the stables and into the drizzling rain.

Alex was amazed by her, he's not much of a rider, he only tried his luck in Ireland but he found himself liking it though he was definitely not as good as her. She was speeding and in a few seconds she disappeared down the valley and Alex wondered if that was her regular attitude or was she just in a foul mood.

He suddenly realized the boy was still there, sketching and never looking up. Alex wondered who he could be, what was the reason he was here alone in the stables?

"Do you mind?"

Alex jumped, those feline dark eyes flickered up at him and he felt chained to the ground. "You're in my way."

Alex stepped away from wherever he was and goes around to see what the boy was drawing. It was the horses and the sketch was down right amazing, every outline, every shadow, every miniscule detail drawn so perfectly well and it was as if it was a black and white photograph.

"You're wickedly good at that."

The boy gave no sort of reaction, there was no smile, no hum or nod, he just kept moving his pencil and Alex nervously licked his lips, wondering what can he do or say next, "What's your name?"

The boy halted his movements, leaving Alex to wonder if he did something wrong. He's suddenly nervous now and the boy turned to look at him and frowning, "You know who I am." And he goes back sketching his art diligently not caring about the confused expression on Alex's face.

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Alex took his leave of the strange boy and finds the patio. He saw Lionel and another girl at the pool. He was in the water and she had her legs dangling as the two chatted away laughing in between conversation.

Lionel spotted him from the corner of his vision and waved at him, grinning widely, "Ah Alex come you finally found us."

"Alex...?" The girl was staring at him, suddenly raising her brow and taking in his appearance, "I don't think I've heard of this friend of yours Lionel."

"We uh just met," Alex said as he went timidly closer to the pool, rolled up his pants length and dipped his feet into the water. He flinched at how cold it was as Lionel was grinning at him happily in his swimsuit immune to the temperature, "Fucking freezing, isn't it?"

"Yes," Alex replied then he smiled, "How the hell –"

The girl giggled, "Oh Lionel here loves the cold, don't you sweetheart. I'm convinced he's a vampire."

"The only blood I'll be gorging on is yours Kathlyn Myers."

The girl simply smirked, "And I'll happily give you it if that is what you wish." And Alex is suddenly seeing the two leaning closer and closer together, almost as if they were about to kiss when someone threw a bottle at Lionel.

"Oi keep your hands to your fucking side and stay the hell away from my girlfriend!"

Kathlyn's laughing as Lionel paddled away grinning at the annoyed boy standing there by the door. Alex had to double take because the boy standing there looked almost identical to Lionel except for his hair which was still blonde just cut short. He moved closer, blue eyes glaring at his brother as he placed his hand on Kathlyn, "You should

head inside. It's cold."

"But I'm not cold," Kathlyn declared, eyes coquettishly flickering up at him.

He frowned and Lionel goes swimming to the edge of the pool, propping his elbow up on the concrete, "Luke, I wasn't flirting with her you know I don't swing that way."

"I don't care where the fuck you swing just stay the hell away from her."

Lionel only stared at him and then smiled, "Sure thing little brother."

Little? Alex looked between them, they looked practically the same age, he almost thought they were twins but Alex is seeing how smaller Luke was in terms of his features, his face though hardened by his expression, his lean figure built with muscles like his brother, there's a much more youthful look about him like Alex. He reckoned they were the same age, seventeen.

Luke ordered Kathlyn again, this time much more sweetly, leaning into her ear, kissing her neck as she giggled while he flirtatiously tells her dinner was ready and to go eat something. She obeyed this time, getting up from the pool, "Nice to see you Alex."

Luke's eyes finally darted towards him as if he finally noticed he'd been there and then smirked, "So you too got put here by your father?"

"You know me?"

Luke tilted his head, "Who doesn't? You're top in Knightley Academy, that all boys Catholic school." He held out his hand, "Luke Anderson, my annoying big brother Lionel you've met. We both attend another boarding school in Wales, West Moore."

Alex glanced at Lionel, "I thought you went to my school."

"I went to both and was homeschooled at some point," Lionel said then grinned cheekily, "I'm deemed by both Headmaster's — a trouble maker."

Luke scoffed, "You're more than that."

"How so?" Lionel replied with a tilt of his head.

The two seeming to be holding each other's gaze. It was hard to tell if it was animosity or just stupid sibling standoff, Alex never had a brother or any sibling so he couldn't exactly figure it out but by the way Luke seemed, it was clear he does not like his older brother at all.

"Dinner's ready," Luke said instead of answering the question, he patted Alex on his shoulders before leaning in and whispering in his ear, "Don't fall for his charm, he's not all what he appears to be." Alex looked up at Luke and it was suddenly hard to figure which brother was insincere and which was meant to be likeable.

Lionel goes on swimming without a care, and Alex was looking back at where Luke was heading, he felt the urge to follow him, probably in hopes to form an excuse to eat while in truth he just wanted to get away and maybe sneak back to his room to be alone.

He was finally realizing why that strange boy was alone in the stables, to get away from this drama. These kids seemed like they were at each other's throats, it was hard to breathe without feeling tense every five minutes.

"You should follow him," Lionel said, as if that was meant to be a warning.

Alex's heart quickened, he ultimately did what he was told and got up. Lionel's blue eyes followed him till he was at the door and he shutted it before turning to see Luke standing there bracing against the wall.

"Hungry?"

Alex quietly nodded and he followed the boy towards where the kitchen was. Kathlyn is setting the table, placing the fork and knife. "Oh I was just going to eat in my room," Alex said nervously.

Kathlyn's lips curled up in a slight smirk, "Oh no we all eat together."

"Yes," Luke clarified as he was bringing the food to the table, "It's a way to ensure we're all alive in this fucking prison." He shot Alex a grin, patting his shoulder again, "Welcome to the family. Sit. Everyone will be here shortly."

And Alex gingerly finds a seat, with Kathyln as his guide to ensure him which seats were already chosen by a member of the Manor. He finally got one in the far left, close to the hearth of the chimney with the stag head looking down at the long table of food.

"Where's the staff?" he asked Kathlyn.

She pulled her chair, at the right of the other far side, next to the head of the seat where Luke was pulling the chair of — presumably taking the head of the household too. "The staff only comes in Fridays to clean up, the rest of the days we are alone."

"That's..." Alex was staring at empty glass in front of him, seeing his reflection, "That's almost scary, like..." He lets out a breathy laughter, "We can do anything we want, we have no supervision whatsoever."

"Except," said a scolding voice. Lizzy comes into view, still in her riding gear, her long brown hair loosen out of her braid, it's damp from the drizzle. Her fingers are on Luke's shoulder, her angry eyes on Alex, "This is my father's house and as the mistress of this household you adhere to *my* rules."

Luke looked up at Lizzy, grinning widely at her, he takes her hand and placed a kiss on her bare knuckles, "We would *never* disobey you, Elizabeth."

She pulled her hand away, wrinkling her nose in disgust as if Luke touches belong to that of a rat.

She takes the chair next to him though, across from Kathlyn who was studying her carefully with her those sharp eyes, "Why didn't you change out of your riding gear?"

"I see no reason, I'm going to eat, shower and then head up to my room and not bother with any of you."

Luke started twisting his fork, "Who got you angry, my dearest Elizabeth."

She leaned into her seat, still frowning as she looked at the three of them, "None of you."

"Are you always this angry?" Alex found himself saying. His voice was low and quiet and Elizabeth stared at him, too stunned at his question.

Finally she sighed, the tension in her shoulders loosen and she shook her head, "No, but I suppose all eldest daughters have some form of rage that stem from their fathers'."

Kathlyn gave a hmph, which earned her a swat on her hand by Luke who's eyes were never looking away from Elizabeth. Kathlyn just rolled her eyes and leaned back in her seat huffing to herself. Lionel soon comes in, wiping his hair throwing the towel over his shoulder and kissing the top of Elizabeth's head, "Hello Lizzy, where have you been whole day?" He pulled a chair next to her sitting between Alex and her.

Elizabeth smiled sweetly at him, "On the telephone with father as he tells me another stray is gonna be dropped off here at my home." Her eyes are on Alex again but there was no anger there anymore, she seemed to be teasing actually but just like Lionel – in fact with every single one of them – he's not sure he could ever give in to their olive branch of promising friendship this rest of the summer.

"I'm starving," Lionel said reaching for the food.

"Wait," Luke ordered, frowning at the table, "We're missing one more?"

Elizabeth turned back to look at the entrance and there was no sign of anyone coming. She pushed her seat from her table, "I'll go get him."

Luke lightly grabbed her waist, "And the wine, would you?"

Alex was startled by that, "We get to drink?"

Lionel chuckled, "You can't positively think we'll be here alone and not get access to the wine cellar."

Alex found himself loosening up, finally smiling honestly, "Well not exactly, I didn't think they would..."

Luke rested his chin on his interwined hands, "Elizabeth is our hostess, whatever she allows is permitted."

And yet she only did it cause you said so. Alex was begining to understand there was a dynamic involved there. Kathlyn was Luke's girlfriend yes but there was a power play between Luke and Elizabeth and he wondered what was exactly going on.

Elizabeth came back and she was grabbing the boy from the stables by the neck of his jumper, dragging him as if he was a unwilling cat. He's frowning as he took a seat next to Kathlyn, she leaned in saying loudly enough for everyone to hear, "You sink by the way, like horse shit."

"Fuck off Kathy."

Kathlyn only scoffed, watching as Elizabeth hand Lionel the wine and he graciously open the seal with a pop whilst Luke was laughing and clapping. "Finally we can eat. Let's dig in folks."

Alex knew he was hungry but bloody hell he thought he would find eating in front of strangers weird especially how they were all friends and he was nowhere close to any of them, except maybe Elizabeth in terms she was his god-sister but he knew nothing of her as he knew nothing of the rest of them.

And one would think Alex would gravitate towards Lionel or perhaps Luke the two lions who seemed to be always in the push and pull of dominance, or at least one of the two girls but no, instead Alex's eyes were wandering towards boy who quietly ate his food.

He isn't picking at his food presay, he eats slow, methodically with every bit seeming to be thought of as he used the fork and chewed the bits of meat he's cut earlier in squares.

"Nigel Colbie."

Alex flinched when he heard the whisper of the voice in his ear, also the mention of the name and the fact that he was called out for staring at the boy who was sitting across at the long table. Lionel turned and grinned at him blocking his lips so no one could read what he's saying as he continued to whisper, "Elizabeth's second-cousin I think, he's going to be attending your school soon after the summer is over."

Alex turned to look at him, "Why?"

Lionel smirked, "Because he got kicked out of ours."

But he wouldn't say why and Alex is suddenly all the more intrigued because not only does he felt drawn to the boy — partly because he had stayed at his country house for nearly two weeks before meeting him here, but also because they seemed connected through a kinship already, his father already knowing his and now they are both boys of

the Academy.

It felt right to befriend him though he wished to do it for himself and not for his father.

Apart of Alex knew Nigel would not want nor wish to be his friend and as if hearing his thoughts Nigel's eyes flickered up at him, his lips on the glass of wine, taking a small sip yet he's licking his lips and there's a sort of shadow of a smirk there or maybe it was the flickering of the chimney fire — Alex couldn't tell and something in the pit of his stomach was moving and suddenly he was on edge again.

Chapter End Notes

For the sake of this fic Luther is Nigel's and not a neighbour's.

Also please note I am not British nor am I American. So don't come after me with the inaccuracies, whatever I write it just me doing a bit of research here and there (that is if research is a bunch of UK shows like the Crown and Peaky Blinders and a quick google search hehehe~). I've never stepped foot in Wales nor Scotland or anything part of the U.K for that matter (though I kind of want to) so please don't get offended my fellow British folks (love ya muah <3!)

Chapter 3: 6 of hearts ♥

Chapter Notes

> So I forgot to add that the entirety of this fanfic could've never been written weren't for me going through my old playlist and getting back into Mother Mother (I'll definitely mention the songs to the chapters that I think would just add more to the vibes).
>
> Listening some of their music truly inspired this mess of a story so if you haven't already heard of them, go check them out ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The first night in the strange manor Alex Frobes could not sleep.

He kept feeling uncomfortable even as he fluffed his pillow numerous times already. Something felt off, felt wrong and he blamed it on the wine because he read articles where drinking alcohol before bed can actually decrease sleep quality and he was clearly feeling insomnic right now.

Tired yet unable to sleep he pushed the blankets off of the bed and decided he will just simply find something to do. The Manor was big enough, he was certain there was a library somewhere and so he moved carefully in the dark halls, resting his palm against the walls for guidance.

He kept on walking around the right wing until he saw fluorescence light coming from a room and curiosity made him opened it. He didn't know what to expect, a part of him wasn't sure why he opened the door but he paused the second he did as he saw Nigel Colbie standing there over a long table with a clear plastic covering it, on it lay a fox limbs spread out, dead yellow eyes staring right into Alex's green ones as he stood there motionless watching as Nigel methodically take out the organs of the animal, resting them on the scale before writing impassively in his notes.

There was blood on his gloves, a plastic apron to keep him from getting blood on his clothes. Nigel ignored him and kept proceeding with the autopsy on the animal.

Alex suddenly was smelling everything in the room, the ordor of the dead animal, the high scent of chloride and the irritating odor of formaldehyde that made Alex feel like his nose was being burnt off as

he breathe. He's gagging now when he saw Nigel pulling the intestines of the fox and he quickly slammed the door shut.

"What were you doing in there?"

"Ah!"

He startled back seeing Elizabeth standing there in the hallway, she's out of her riding gear and in pajamas which made sense given the time of night, she looked disheveled probably just gotten out of bed as he had. She frowned at him, grabbing him by his arm so tight he felt her nails digging right to his bone, as she tried to drag him with her, "Ow! What the fuck, *let go!*"

"You shouldn't be disturbing him. What are you doing out of bed anyways?"

Alex pulled away his hand and she halted turning to glare at him. "I couldn't sleep jeez, I thought I could find the library and read something to pass the time before I'm actually tired."

Elizabeth was assessing his words, she was still glaring at him trying to detect a lie, "What were you doing in Nigel's studies?"

"I saw the light on and thought I could check it out."

"And?"

Alex shrugged, "And what?"

Elizabeth stepped closer to him, their heights not matching so she looked up at him, her eyes darker now in the night, she whispered, "What did you see?"

Alex swallowed, he's confused now. He thought Nigel and her were close given Lionel told them they were family but it seemed that was not the case and Elizabeth looked almost terrified at whatever it was that Alex may or may not have seen.

"He was dissecting a fox," Alex whispered back, "Weighing his organs and writing in some book."

Elizabeth stared at him, silent for a moment before stepping back, "Oh." She turned around, "Library is on the ground floor, you go down the hall, make two lefts and you'll find it."

She carried on walking and Alex reached out for her, "You're allowing

him to do that in your home?"

Elizabeth looked down at his hand holding her wrist and then up at him before yanking it away, "Nigel isn't someone who you say no to, not ever." She goes up to him, hand reaching out and patting the middle of his chest where his heart was, "You best leave him alone if you know what's good for you."

Alex should be nervous, he was suddenly feeling a mixture of emotions, not for the girl standing in front of him but the thought of the strange boy and his weird fixations. They say curiosity kills the cat and Alex may probably be classified as one.

Elizabeth left him to his thoughts, headed to her room – wherever that was – as Alex considered his options either go downstairs and find the library or go back in his room or... simply go back into the room where Nigel was and demand him to explain to him why he liked doing those sort of things.

Alex was not so brave or stupid yet and he was certain he probably wouldn't find the library even with the directions given to him, the Manor was too complex and he was sure he'll get lost and stumble upon something else possibly even more horrifying than what he just saw, one could never be certain. So in the end he took his second option, bed, where he threw his head on the pillow, trying to command his body to go to sleep.

He closed his eyes and he dreamt he had been the one on that table as Nigel cut him open with a hunting dagger, smiling impishly down at his petrified state.

-

"Heads up..."

Alex barely got hold of the water bottle thrown at him as he and his dogs followed Luke into the woods to chop lumber.

He barely remembered how he got to this point. Waking up sluggish and drained, he basically found himself sleeping away as he brushed his teeth before going downstairs to happily find coffee and tea already boiled and brewed waiting to be made. He took the coffee, pouring himself a cup and Luke had entered the kitchen bracing against the counter watching Alex carefully.

"Lizzy told me you couldn't sleep."

Alex nodded, "Yeah and when I did I..." He stopped himself from explaining his nightmare, if he should consider that as one because though it was horrific in nature not once did his body jolt him awake, he simply just lay there and allowed his mind to conjure up all sort of crazed imagery, "Ugh just had some bad dreams."

Luke slowly nodded, "Well maybe I can get you from being so sluggish and lazy, want to head in the forest with me? The weather seems promising, you and I could chop some good wood for a fire side and we'll spend the night outside for dinner."

Alex didn't see the problem, he knew how to use an axe, learnt that at his time in Ireland and even in Wales those past summer weeks. He almost found it oddly coincidentally that it's coming into good use as if his father must have planned this.

No, his father was not as cunning and strategic as he believed his own self to be. Alex just concluded it as a coincidence.

"Yeah sure, just us?"

"Yeah just us and your dogs too if you want to bring them along."

Alex nodded and went on sipping his coffee as Luke walked out and before he knew it he's out going at the back of the Manor in the long vast estate, hiking to the woods with an axe in his hand as he followed Luke.

He was still sluggish even as he chopped the lumber, his arms slack and his fingers too weak to get a good grip and Luke kept watching him, eyeing him like a lion or a cheetah.

"Why don't you take a break?"

"No I'm good." Alex flexed his fingers once more and tried lifting the axe again but failed terribly.

"Take a break Frobes."

Alex stopped and the dogs are suddenly getting uneasy, growling at Luke as the two stared at each other for a long moment. Luke gave him a slight smile as if he heard something funny. "You are trying to prove something, to who? I'm not your father."

Alex tilted his head at him, axe in hand, "I never said you were."

Luke chuckled, "Yet keep pushing yourself. Are you hoping to impress someone then, Lizzy perhaps? She's not here you know."

Alex frowned, "Why the fuck —?"

"Stay away from her."

Alex flinched, suddenly confused and annoyed, "Look I never — is this about last night when she found me? Did she say where I was?"

"Nigel's studies, yeah I know."

Alex nodded, shoulders slackening, "Good. I don't know her, I don't know *you*, I don't know *any* of you for that matter."

Luke frowned, flipping his own axe in his hand "Which I found strangely odd I must say."

Alex stepped away watching as Luke swung and chopped the rest of the lumber. "Your father has always kept you in the dark with his club, do you even know what it is about?"

"Do you?"

Luke scoffed, "My grandfather is keeping it tightly sealed from both my brother and I but I think Lionel knows. Even if in the end I will gain everything — the family estate, the wealth, the company, Lizzy, he still gets the title of eldest and becomes the member of the society while I probably stay in the shadows of the outside world."

Alex double take on what he had said, watching as Luke place another log on the smooth stump. He furrowed his brows, wondering if he heard right or was he just so tired he misheard what Luke said. "Wait, did you just say you get Lizzy, what does that mean?"

A wicked smile curled his lips as he swung the axe, "She's my fiancé."

Alex was godsmacked and bewildered all at once, "What? But you're seventeen and she's like sixteen. How the hell?"

He laughed, "It's arranged. My grandfather with her father. It's good for us. The family I mean, our blood together will be strong."

Alex considered stepping away from Luke. He sounded insane but also he just realized why Luke was so protective of Elizabeth. "But you have a girlfriend."

Luke shrugged, "So? Kathlyn knows her place."

Alex laughed, "Oh does she?" He shook his head, this is ridiculous, they shouldn't be having this kind of conversation but also he was looking at Luke in another form of light, a kind of admiration suddenly. The scene at the dinner table was also now making sense, the way Kathlyn rolled her eyes as Luke gave Elizabeth all his attention. Why was she even allowing herself to be stringed along in such a manner? Maybe Luke had a charm about him that she couldn't help but like, maybe it was the way he could control her? Suddenly Alex was looking at him carefully, taking him in as he chopped the wood wondering what those two girls even saw in him.

"If that look is you checking me out, trust me you don't have to be bothered, we can simply get it over with right here."

Stunned by Luke forthrightness Alex stumbled on his words, "I – I wasn't – I don't –"

Luke laughed, "Relax I'm only just teasing."

"I'm not gay," Alex found himself blurting out.

Luke straightened his posture, holding the axe in his hand. His eyes forking up and down Alex's body before giving a simple shrug, "Well in that case, my brother is going to be deeply disappointed."

-

The rest of the day Alex spent in his room. He seemed unable and unwilling to go outside to talk with these people.

He genuinely hated it there and felt that every area he turned to, whether it be the library, kitchen, patio or simply the garden, there was always someone he was walking into and they seemed contented enough to gather around him like a crow's funeral.

Alex found the time in his room quite relaxing though he was completely bored out of his mind, he missed Josh and even Raj and found himself wondering if he could call them seeing he wasn't being supervised like before.

But Alex didn't had it in him to go down to find Elizabeth, he didn't wanted to confront her with the new knowledge he now had of her. Something about Luke and the way he talked did something to Alex, made him feel like his skin was being slowly peeled away or maybe he was just being paranoid. Alex concluded he hated Luke though there was also admiration in there somewhere — so in all it just resulted in green envy.

In his room, there he sat by the window ledge looking ahead at the vast green landscape. He was told by Lionel there was a beach not too far from the large estate, that Lizzy would ride till there and come back.

I could do with my toes in the sand a bit, he thought still not moving from his position.

A knock startled him out of his thoughts, he turned nervous by who it could be.

"Um... come in."

The knob turned, the door pushed and a crown of raven black hair showed up. Nigel locked eyes with him and Alex sat there still by the window ledge frozen. He barely managed to get the words out of his mouth, "W-what do you want?"

Why the hell am I nervous of this guy?

You know why he's a creep and you saw what he did last night.

Nigel clenched his jaw as if once again he could hear what Alex's thoughts were saying about him. He offered a weak, faint smile, "I thought you were bored. Here."

He handed him a novel and Alex took it from from, a bit confused but also thankful cause that meant he could pass the time reading something, anything actually. "Ugh thanks... I guess."

Nigel said nothing, stared at him as Alex glanced down at the book 'Tales of Mystery and Imagination' he'd always wanted to start this but never found the time and here Nigel was handing him the book.

Alex looked up at him seeing the curve of his lips turned into a faint smile and suddenly Nigel was speaking to him, "I apologize for the smell and noise if there were any last night. I'm afraid besides me you are the only one who resides on the right wing and I've long grown use to being alone."

Alex slowly nodded, "It's okay. I shouldn't have bragged in like that."

Nigel was quiet and Alex stared at the side of his face, the sharp jawline, the long eyes lashes, that upturned pretty pale pink lips — *what the fuck!?* Suddenly Alex panicked, looked away confused as to where his mind was heading and angry at himself cause Luke was suddenly in his head repeating that snarky comment that had caused Alex to just snapped and proceeded to walk away with his dogs from him as he carried on laughing in the background of the forest.

"If you struggle with sleep tonight again you can come," Nigel spoke up, his voice was deep, husky, hypnotic like a siren baiting a sailor to his demise, "I am certain I have ways of helping you fall asleep... if you're desperately in need of them."

Alex frowned, "What's that suppose to mean?"

Nigel goes for the doorknob, smirking at Alex, "You know what it means."

And he's gone, shutting the door easily leaving Alex staring at the book. He opened it up and goes on reading until his mind got weary, his eyes were closing in on itself and his limbs numb, he's asleep before he finishes chapter three 'Morella'.

-

Dinner at a campfire felt strange. He came down by the sound of Lionel knocking on his door. "You still living, mate?"

Alex — who had woken back up from his nap — was again reading, sprawled out on bed. From the moment he heard Lionel's voice he put away the book and got up wiping his face and rubbing his eyes, "Yeah, yeah I'm living." He cracked a smile as he reached for the door. Lionel looked at him carefully and before Alex could moved pass him to leave he placed his hand out and stopped him.

"Look my brother..."

"Is a dick."

Lionel cracked a smile, "Yeah he tends to give off that sort of impression onto some people, it's partly why Elizabeth hates him."

"She hates him?"

Lionel shrugged, "Well she tries to, it's hard not to you know."

"I suppose it's the same with you, right?" Alex said carefully.

Lionel smiled, leaning closer, "I'm only a dick to my brother, everyone else I like." There was a sudden pause of silence between them, Lionel's blue eyes flickered down for a brief second and Alex realized what he's thinking and how he has not once hid his intentions the moment he had arrived. Alex shifted nervously before stepping back, "Look man... I..."

Lionel chuckled, "No I – I'm sorry." He downs his head shyly, "My brother told me you're not interested. I guess that's just my luck, eh."

Alex didn't know what that meant but he could see there was a sudden pain in Lionel's eyes, he was forcing it away with a grin, "Let's go eat, yeah." He stepped away from the the door space, giving room for Alex to pass, "I hope you like the barbeque, I helped grilled the meat."

Alex smiled at him, "It can't be that bad, right? It's basically just roasted meat with spices."

Lionel laughed, shrugging, "Sure I suppose you're right about that."

Alex got Artemis and Apollo to join them for the campfire dinner and to his surprise he's seeing two other dogs there, an lrish wolfhound and a Rottweiler both already sitting by the fireside enjoying the taste of meat given to them by Elizabeth who was graciously petting them as Kathlyn and Luke dished out the food in plastic plates for everyone to eat.

Nigel was also there too by the fire, sitting on a lumber log by himself, staring into the crackling flames as Alex and Lionel approached them.

"Ah look who it is..." Kathlyn said immediately drawing everyone's attention.

Both Luke and Elizabeth turned to see, their gazes on Alex for different reasons entirely as he awkwardly cleared his throat. "Hello everyone."

Luke offered him a plate, "I hope you didn't lock yourself away because of the conversation we had."

Alex froze in his spot. Luke was always so very annoyingly direct, Alex had no energy to explain himself as to why he did what he did but also he didn't wanted to give Luke the satisfaction of him realizing he was the reason Alex locked himself away.

"Actually I thought I would do some reading."

"Really?" Elizabeth eyes immediately light up – which had Kathlyn rolling her eyes remarking, "Honestly you act like anyone who reads has accomplished the greatest achievement."

"That's because people hardly *do* read Kathy," she snapped back at her, then smiled at Alex, "But I only meant it in a way to ask you found the library?"

Alex could feel Nigel's gaze. He gave a half-hearted smile, "Not quite. I

just got a book I decided it's time to read it."

He was looking directly at Nigel now, the flames crackling in front of all of them was enough to show the small satisfied smile on Nigel's face. Lionel eyes flickered between the two before sitting besides Alex, Nigel frowned at this, watching as Lionel leaned rather close to him, "So what book are you reading?"

"Um..." he did his best to avoid Nigel from looking at him, "Tales of Mystery and Imagination."

Elizabeth smiled, hugging herself as she stared into the fire, "Ah... '*To be buried while alive is, beyond question, the most terrific of these extremes which has ever fallen to the lot of mere mortality. That it has frequently, very frequently, so fallen will scarcely be denied by those who think. The boundaries which divide Life from Death are at best shadowy and vague. Who shall say where the one ends, and where the other begins?*'"

Alex met her gaze, the fire dancing in her eyes, perhaps he'd misjudged everything from the first time he'd met her because here Elizabeth seemed incredibly beautiful in the sight of flames and darkness looming around her.

"'*An unaccountable, and what I am compelled to consider a magnetic, sympathy of soul for soul, seemed to rivet, not only my vision, but my whole powers of thought and feeling, upon the admirable object before me*'." Heads turned to see Nigel staring at the flames as he spoke, his eyes landed on Alex then on Elizabeth before flickering back at Alex as he quoted, softly in the clam silence, "'*I saw — I felt — I knew that I was deeply, madly, irrevocably in love — and this even before seeing the face of the person beloved. So intense, indeed, was the passion that consumed me, that I really believed it would have received little if any abatement had the features, yet unseen, proved of merely ordinary character; so anomalous is the nature of the only true love — of the love at first sight — and so little really dependent is it upon the external conditions which only seem to create and control it.*'"

The entire campfire was silent, Lionel looking between the two as Kathlyn quietly drank her glass of wine while Luke sat next to her sketching his limbs before throwing his arm around her, "If I don't know any better, I'll say you're both serenading to dear Mr. Frobes over here."

"Shut up, Anderson," Elizabeth muttered but she was blushing as she bit into her food and Alex was smiling at himself too as he felt the

heat in his cheeks before his eyes locked on Nigel again who was frowning at them all as the Rottweiler sloppily nibble on a piece of meat from his fingers.

Alex was stunned, "That's your dog?"

Kathlyn chuckled, "You'll think not cause of Nigel's personality but it is in fact his."

"No one was talking to you Kathy," Nigel said ever so softly but commanding with every vowel.

Kathlyn gave him a coyish smile, "Well someone needs to talk for you, sweetie, you are so utterly introverted."

"You say it like it's a bad thing," Elizabeth scowled.

"I never said it wasn't."

"Good," Luke said turning to face her, "Then stop talking."

Kathlyn looked at everyone around the campfire, they were all staring at her and she scoffed, clenching her jaw and blinking back her tears, "You're a fucking ass Luke, you didn't have to –"

"Didn't have to what? Hmm? Embarrassed you?" He sneered at her, leaning into her ear hissing, "You do that yourself, love."

Kathlyn pushed him to the point he stumbled off the log near the fire, Luke gramiced, hissing from the burning on his arm before getting up and grabbing her by the cheek, "You fucking bitch."

Kathlyn spat at him.

"You two stop!" Lionel shouted.

"Don't come between us brother!" Luke yelled, pointing at him, "This has nothing to do with you."

"Well considering the two of you are fighting and we're all trying to eat here I'll say it has *everything* to do with me and everyone else for that matter, don't you agree Lizzy?"

Luke's angry eyes flickered to Elizabeth who's just staring at the two of them, her gaze a blank canvas, features devoid of emotions as she replied, "Yes Lionel, now Luke behave before I call your grandfather."

Luke clenched his jaw, he sat back down and Kathlyn moved away from him and went to Elizabeth's side which once again was oddly surprisingly considering Alex thought they hated each other because of Luke.

"Let me see," Elizabeth whispered checking Kathlyn's face to see if Luke had hurt her as he scoffed and rolled his eyes.

"You're acting like a beat her or something, she got me burnt don't you see?" He's showing the side of his arm and Elizabeth glared, snapping at him, "You deserved it."

Luke clenched his jaw, he lifted his bottle of beer to his lips, drinking the contents before resting it down, "Whatever I'm out of here."

He started walking and Elizabeth stood up and calling back at him, "I never said you could leave!"

Luke turned around mockingly bowing, "My dear Duchess, can I fucking *leave*?"

Elizabeth kept glaring at him, folding her arms, "No, now sit the down and eat with the rest of us. It was *your* rule for us to dine with each other every night, don't walk out of this Luke."

They held each other's gaze and Luke chewed the inside of his jaw, tapping his foot before looking at her then at Alex, "Fine, scoot over Frobes. I'm sitting between you and my brother."

The moment Luke did, Artemis started growling at him making him startled back. Alex reached out and pet her, "Calm down girl, it's okay."

Elizabeth smirked, taking her seat, "She doesn't like you."

Luke rolled his eyes, "I don't need her to like me." His eyes on Kathlyn, "I just need her to *obey*."

Kathlyn frowned at him and Elizabeth caught the exchange. "I feel sorry for you Lizzy," Kathlyn said, looking at her now, "You'll be the one to spend the rest of your life with a narcissist, contorling freak."

"What did you just call me?!"

Nigel started laughing and everyone turned to look at him, seeing him shook his head as he placed a piece of the meat in his mouth chewing,

"You're all are such pathetic fools." He stood up, "Come on Luther, let's go."

As he walked away, Luke was glaring at the back of him before snapping at Elizabeth, "If he's going I'm going." And he got up and ran after Nigel.

Alex watched as Luke made it up to him, throwing his hand around Nigel's shoulders as he allowed him to lean into his ear telling him something. It was odd to see such an interaction, the Rottweiler following merrily behind them as Luke chatted with Nigel who listened without any form of protest, it made something stirred in the pit of Alex's stomach, a stab of a blade, twisting and he's finding it hard to swallow his food.

Kathlyn looked around the group before pushing herself up, "Looks like I'll head out too. Bye." And she goes off calling after Luke who turned back and held out his hand for her to take. The two swinging along merrily before running together towards the other side of the estate where the greenhouse was.

Elizabeth sighed looking at her plate of food, "So much for eating like a family huh?" She went and petted the Irish wolfhound, the dog allowed her, licking her fingers affectionately as she giggled.

Lionel smiled, "She likes you."

"All dogs like me," Elizabeth replied matter-of-factly as she kept generously petting the giant dog. Apollo — like always, the jealous one he was — pushed his way for petting also and Elizabeth happily shared her affection with him.

"Why don't you own any?" Alex found himself asking as he smiled seeing Apollo exposing his belly out for scratches.

"Oh I'm a cat person actually, I don't really go out of my way loving dogs. My brother has a dog though, a Greyhound."

"You have a brother?"

She nodded, "And a sister."

"And where are they?"

Suddenly she got quiet, her eyes watering as she looked down at Apollo smiling at him, "Who's a good boy?"

The only reply she got was more heavy breathing from him as she rubbed his chin and ears before pushing herself up, "I'm going to head in too." She placed her hand on Alex's shoulder, he flinched looking at it then up at her as she stepped back, her hand going to Lionel and petting his long hair before resting a kiss on his forehead, "Good night you boys."

Lionel smiled up at her, "I'll make sure everything goes inside."

"Please do."

Lionel reassuringly squeezed her hand, her eyes lingering on Alex for a moment before turning away.

Alex stared at the fire for a long time, quietly eating his food before he found it in himself to speak, "Are all of you this weird?"

Lionel laughed, drinking his beer, "Not all the time but yeah this is most of the time."

Alex chewed his food, the image of Luke's hand around Nigel as he said something in his ear was bothering him, what could he possibly have told Nigel and the way Nigel nonchalantly did not even bother to push him away said a lot.

"What's going on in that head of yours?" Lionel asked.

Alex suddenly felt like he's been put on trail and started stuttering, "I uh, I..."

Lionel laughed, "The way I heard about your reputation I immediately think you were like Luke but what's with you, huh? Is it because your intimated by me or by us in general or is it because you don't feel you can be yourself with us, truly?"

Alex sighed heavily, cracking a half-hearted smile, "Both actually or all three of the above."

Lionel chuckled, nodding his head, "No one's gonna judge you here Alex. We don't judge because what's the point when we ourselves don't want to be judged."

"Luke judges Kathlyn all the time."

"That's because she *likes* it like that. She's a mess let me tell you that and Luke knows well what she likes, I bet they're off fucking

somewhere in greenhouse or in the forest getting mud all over their bodies in the process."

The imagery was enough to make Alex suddenly tense and uncomfortable, he shifted in his position and Lionel caught a glimpse of the way Alex's adam's apple moved when he swallowed.

Lionel just chuckled to himself, drinking his beer, "Such a shame."

"What?"

"You..." Lionel said, his lion gaze so heavy and it made Alex feel every single hair on his body. He was intimated yet could not look away from him.

Lionel was bracing on his hand, moving closer to Alex, there's a sudden panic within him and yet he could not find the strength in him to turn away from where he sat so still, waiting to see what Lionel would do next.

The sound of gunshot blasted through the air — *bang!* Startling them both and Lionel was looking around as Alex was almost half way off the log feeling the drumming of his heart and the ringing of his ears.

"Bloody hell, who fired a gun?" Lionel said getting up though he's not at all worried.

There at the Manor, far upstairs Alex saw the window was being slammed shut and curtains moved. *That's Nigel's room*, he thought and without a moment of thought he went running towards the house.

Lionel called after him, "Hey! Where are you going? Look I'm sorry!"

The dogs followed Alex into the Manor, up the stairs, Alex was shouting for him, "Nigel! Nigel!" He was banging at the door of his room, "Nigel the fuck opened up!" He banged again, louder this time and Nigel opened up frowning at him.

"What?"

Alex pushed himself in, looking around, "Did you fire a gun?"

Nigel was quiet, he doesn't say anything. Alex looked at him carefully, he was seeing how the room look strangely similar to his own except for the books on the bed and the notes on the desk. He went towards them, seeing sketches of different things, birds, horses, foxes, deers.

There's human sketches of individuals with no clear define face, then there's drawings of Elizabeth smiling and Alex's eyes flickered up to Nigel before he goes and grabbed it from Alex.

"Don't touch my stuff," he said quietly.

Alex was silent, he couldn't understand what was what's going on nor why's he was acting this way as he saw the sketches, "Why are you drawing Lizzy?"

Nigel turned to look at him, brow raised, "She never approved of you to call her that."

Alex stepped forward, "Why are you drawing her? Aren't you like cousins?"

Nigel tilted his head, there's a smile curling his lips, "Is that what you think?"

Alex's eyes went wide and he stepped away, "I'm not thinking anything."

Nigel stepped forward invading his space, "Look me in the eyes and tell me what I'm thinking Alex. Tell me why I shot that gun."

Alex kept staring at him, there was a sudden eeire feeling in him, he wa not only nervous, he felt downright terrified cause his own thoughts were betraying him, they felt like someone else's, luring him into a trap and Nigel's blue eyes seemed like a snare set to catch him.

"Stay the hell away from me," Alex whispered, before he goes running out of the room.

Chapter End Notes

The summary of this chapter is basically Alex just gay panicking which is hilarious~

Everyone wants a piece of that ass whoohoo! (Lmao please don't take me on I'm sleep deprived — I may need to tag that).

Thank you for reading :)

Chapter 4: 6 of diamonds ♦

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Why don't we play a game huh?" Luke suggested the next day after dinner. He goes sitting besides Kathlyn as they were all in the living room, throwing his arm around her as she snuggled in his side.

Elizabeth was focusing on her novel as she spoke up, "What kind of game, Luke?"

He shrugged, "I don't know I was hoping we could decided together."

Lionel scoffed, spread out on the floor as he took a pull of his cigarette that he wrapped with bits of marijuana. Both Alex and him are sharing it which causes Alex too feel himself loosening up, he's suddenly grinning and laughing at everything everyone's saying much to Lionel's amusement.

"We could play cards," Alex suggested, chuckling at the idea as he exhaled out the smoke. Nigel caught his eyes before Alex looked away nervously. "What do you think?"

"That would be perfect and all but there's no cards here in this house," Elizabeth declared.

"Ugh are you kidding me Lizzy!" Luke yelled, throwing his head back, groaning, "Why is your father so boring?"

"I do have chess, if you want a game."

"That's a two player game, we need one for all six of us."

"I have a stack of cards upstairs," Nigel said, his deep voice ringing throughout the room.

Everyone glanced at him and Kathlyn clapped, "Well why didn't you say that before?"

"Exactly," Luke said, "Go get it Nigel before we all die from boredom and start killing each other."

Nigel gets up, eyes glancing at Alex before turning to Luke, "I'll need

help finding it."

"I'll come with," Kathlyn replied, pushing herself up. Nigel looked absolutely disgusted by the offer of help but he gives in and allowed it anyways.

Lionel starts chuckling as he stared up at the ceiling, "Wouldn't you like that baby brother?"

Luke frowns at him, "Like what?"

"We start killing each other. It gives you plenty of excuse to show us your true nature."

"Piss off Lionel." He leaned down at him, "That weed is rotting your brain." Luke met Alex's gaze and suddenly he smirked, "But if I do have to murder someone though I know who I would choose."

Elizabeth looked at him carefully, her fingers on the pages of her book, "Who?"

Luke's grin looked absolutely wicked and downright sinister as Kathlyn and Nigel joined back the group.

"It wasn't hard to find," she said going back into Luke's arms. He kissed her head and suddenly Elizabeth's novel was once again interesting.

Nigel holds the pack of cards, going to the coffee table and knocking them out on the surface. The slide out easily.

"What shall we play?" Luke asked everyone.

"A game of Jack perhaps?" Nigel suggested, shuffling the deck, his hands moving so quick it's hard to see if the cards were even moving.

Suddenly he's flipping a card out revealing a jack of spades and his eyes are on Alex and before he could rein in his thoughts, his words, Alex asked, "Why do you stare at me like that?"

Everyone turned to Alex as he stared back at Nigel who simply looked away with a smirk as he goes shuffling. He turned to his cousin, "Lizzy, would you cut the deck?"

She does and he shuffles again before, passing out the cards. It seemed no one was quite bothered by Alex's words, for one they all knew Nigel was weird and Alex was high so they couldn't care less. As Nigel threw the cards to Lionel he pushes the cards away, getting

comfortable by the table next to Lizzy, "Oh I'm not playing, I'll just watch." He goes instead holding the two joker cards, chuckling at them as Luke snarkily retorted, "They look like you."

To which Lionel only inhaled his cigarette before passing it to Alex, "Yeah I think they do."

"Who's dealing?" Alex asked.

"Nigel you idiot," Kathlyn said, "Honestly Lionel and you are hopeless when you're high."

Alex and Lionel exchange glances and just snorted out laughter which earned them eye rolls from everyone else.

The cards as Alex was handed them, he could feel Nigel's gaze on him, there's a sudden transparency between them, even as they shared no sort of dialogue, Alex could not get the fucker out of his head and that in itself was partially why he was getting high with Lionel but it seemed to only make everything worse. Nigel's gaze are heavy, intense and with how dazed Alex's mine is becoming the sensation of it was like burning coal and freezing ice all at once.

Alex looked at his cards then at Nigel, ace and eight. There's a light smile on Nigel's features, Alex could hear what he's thinking but he has no idea how.

"Not bad," Luke said, "But what would you play it as — a ten or a one?"

Alex doesn't quite know this game, he's hardly much of a gambler but understood enough from playing for fun with his friends down in the school's basement. He looked up at Nigel who's just quietly leaning into his seat. "One," Alex replied, then shrugged, "So that'll make it nine in all right."

"According to the math," Lionel replied teasingly, hiding his smile with the joker card.

"Alex," Elizabeth chuckled, looking at her cards, a six and a seven. "You had a perfect deck."

"I don't know," Kathlyn said, chewing her thumb as she read her own deck, a three and six, "He could still win."

"Could but won't," Luke said with cards of king of spades and five.

"Who's going to hit?" Nigel asked, as he looked at his upturn card eight of clubs.

"I stand," Luke declared in his absolute confidence.

"So do I," Elizabeth replied as she goes back reading her novel, it seemed she wasn't quite into the game but still did it for the fun of it.

Kathlyn asked for a hit receiving a two of hearts and she frowned cause that means she's still below twelve and she wants to win. "Hit me again."

"Leave your hand," Luke reassures.

"No."

Nigel does as he's told and pulls out a five which makes her grin, clapping her hand, "I stand!"

"Of course you do," Lionel replied.

Nigel's focus was on Alex now as he said, "Hit me."

"You can still keep your eighteen, Alex."

They stared at each other and he repeats himself, "Hit me."

Nigel does what he's told and flips the card. It's the jack of spades and Alex held his breath, realizing he has the highest point.

Luke frowns at this and Elizabeth eyes flickered up at Alex, then at the board, Kathlyn chewed her jaw and suddenly everyone grows completive, wanting to play more, wanting to win and Alex just keeps sitting there watching as Nigel goes on shuffling the deck. There's that faint smile dancing on his lips and Alex knew — just by the movement of his fingers — Nigel was going to let him win as much as he could.

There's a sudden mischievousness in this, Nigel could read the cards and Alex could read him.

Alex smiled to himself, he's seeing his new cards out before him, a ten of spades and a four of diamonds.

He decides accordingly.

-

"There's no way," Luke said throwing his cards on the aside. He's pointing at Nigel then at Alex, "You're making him win."

Nigel looked up at him and smiled, "Or maybe you're just terrible at the game."

Luke glared at him, he looked like he was going to punch Nigel with his fist folded but Elizabeth was already standing up, "Luke, calm down it's just a game."

"Yeah but he's won six times!"

"Out of eight," Lionel added, he's looking up at his brother form the floor, tilting his head at him, "And if I recall you've one once with Kathlyn winning the other round."

"Yes but –"

"Just admit it," Alex said looking with him, he's feeling smugged, not because he won or anything but because he finally feels like himself, the tension in his body is loose and he's much relaxed that ever. He leaned forward towards Luke, "You're a sore loser, Luke."

"Why *you* –!"

Luke punched him in the face and before Alex could get up and moved to defend himself Nigel is attacking Luke and Lionel is getting in between them.

Kathlyn is screaming for them to stop and Elizabeth goes to Alex to see his lips ripped with blood. "Dear god you're bleeding."

"Guys come on stop it!" Kathlyn yelled.

"For fuck sakes Kathy shut up and go get me some ice!" Elizabeth told her.

And suddenly Kathlyn halted, her expression change and she's no longer panicking and looks quite well put together, she turned and goes for the ice while Elizabeth rolled her eyes, "Such a drama queen I swear."

Alex started laughing as Elizabeth smiled him.

"Get off of me!" Luke pushed Lionel away, Nigel at some point had landed on the floor also with a brusie but to his nose as blood was running down.

"For fuck sakes Luke just leave!" Elizabeth yelled.

Luke is staring at her, then at his brother and the rest of them. He goes up to her, "You're taking his side over me." He doesn't clarified who's side he means.

"It's. Just. A. *Game*." Elizabeth replied, she sighed, "Honestly, you're so immature, this is why I can't see myself ever happy with you."

And Luke stepped back, looking completely distraught, heartbroken and confused, he looked at each of them then staggered back, turning to walk out. Same time Kathlyn was coming back with the ice. "Luke, what's wrong?"

She hands Elizabeth the ice and goes to him and he pushed her off, "Just leave me alone."

Kathlyn frowned, turning to Elizabeth, "What did you say to him?"

"The truth!" she replied, placing the ice on Alex's lips causing him to flinched at the sudden sensation. The coldness numbs away the pain but only for a bit, he was still very dizzy from the hit and the high.

Kathlyn glared at her, "You bitch, you should be lucky, he's marrying you. A fucking bastard."

Elizabeth stood on her feet, looking ready to kill, "What did you just call me?"

Kathlyn smirked at her, "Like it's any new gossip. You're not your daddy's true heir cause his mistress was pregnant while his wife had your brother. How can you explain the similarities in age, just seven

months apart, hmm?"

Elizabeth walked up to her, eyes cold and Lionel called to her, "Lizzy don't let her bait you."

"Come on Lizzy," Kathlyn whispered, her face moving into Elizabeth, "Do something about it."

Elizabeth just glared at her, before motioning with his chin, "Go to him, that's all you're good for. Soon you'll have his bastard too and we'll then be even."

Kathlyn frowned at her, stepping back from Elizabeth. She goes dashing for Luke once again as Lionel stared at Elizabeth as she attended to Nigel now who was trying to push himself up from the floor.

"God Nigel are you okay?"

She reached and held his face, Alex is staring at the two of them and Nigel's eyes flickered to Alex before looking at his cousin, "I'm fine."

"You nose isn't broken," she said touching the top of it, "That's good. It'll be hard to call a medic so late and in such a isolated part of the region."

Nigel took her hand and squeezed it before resting a kiss on the knuckles, "I'm fine, cousin now let me go."

Alex was frowning as he watch Elizabeth allowed him to leave, he goes limping to the coffee table packing up his deck of cards. Lionel helped him before Nigel turned to leave. "I'll just go with him just in case he collapsed," Lionel said, awkwardly stepping back out of the livingroom as he turned he nearly walked into the wall.

Elizabeth smiled watching to make sure they both were going up the stairs easily before she sighed and started fixing up the living room.

Alex watched her carefully as she moved. "We should probably get you to your room too," she whispered placing the ice back on his face.

He stared at her, finding himself admitting, "I lied..."

Elizabeth eyes flickered up to his, "What?"

"Nigel was helping me win." He shifted himself downing his head a bit causing her to stop pressing his lips with the ice, "I could tell how he

wanted me to play."

"I know."

"What?"

Elizabeth smirked, tilting her head at him, "Come on Alex. I know Nigel was helping you. There's no way he wasn't."

"But you sided with me."

She smiled, "It's just a game. I could honestly care less."

He chuckled at her watching as she leaned in and he thought for a second she was about to kiss him, he shifted his head for it but she paused and watched him before applying the ice on his wound. "How did you know Nigel wanted you to win was there a code or something?"

Alex shook his head, he closed his eyes wondering if he should say it out loud, he'll probably sound ridiculous if he do, "No."

"Then what?"

He opened his eyes, green eyes looking into her brown ones, "I guess I simply read his mind."

She looked like she was about to laugh, but then she saw the sincerity in his eyes and furrowed her brows. "How...?"

Alex simply shrugged, "That... I'm not quite sure yet."

-

Alex goes up and knocked on Nigel's door. If opens instantly and Alex is seeing the blood was no longer there trailing down from his nose on his mouth. There was a slight bruise on his nose and he almost catches himself midway reaching to touch it before he paused and swallowed, dropping his hand to his side.

He wondered if Nigel would flinch at his touch, gramice at the pain or simply allow Alex's fingers to caress his nose. The hot was like burning iron, it did more than just sting and Alex was appalled by his own reflection and thoughts and he's blaming it all on the marijuana.

Nigel tilted his head at him, "What do you want?"

"Why did you do it?"

"Do what?"

Alex moved closer, crossing the threshold and into Nigel's room, "You know what. I told you to stay away from me and yet —"

"And yet you're in my room demanding me why I helped you win a game you didn't know anything about."

Alex flinched, suddenly realized what he meant and Nigel smirked at him, moving closer, "Come on Alex we can spin this conversation however you want, you know my answers to your questions and I know yours to mines."

"I don't know what you're talking about?"

"You want Lizzy," Nigel replied. It wasn't a question it was a statement and he tilted his head at him, eyes flickering from Alex's bruised lips to his eyes, "I can give you her but you have to do something for me."

Alex clenched his jaw, he has the urge to laugh, "And what's that?"

"Let me see you kill."

Alex flinched as they stared at each other silently and Nigel was opening the door for Alex to leave, "Tomorrow when the dawn comes, we'll head out. I want to see you hunt."

"Why are you so interested in that?" Alex whispered.

Nigel was close to him, too close, so close it was just left for Alex lean in just a tiny bit of that that space between them to kiss him and he's suddenly scolding himself for thinking like that. Nigel was a weirdo, he's a lunatic and insane, he shouldn't want to be close to him and yet...

"Be there or else you'll face the consequences," Nigel commanded and pushed Alex out of the room and slammed the door on his face.

Chapter End Notes

The last time I played cards I was idk I think ten or twelve. I don't gamble, I hate it actually and black jack I'm sort of familiar with the rules as I research it got hella confusing from what I really know so I tried here :')

Also I'm going to note Nigel thinks Alex wants Lizzy only and he's half wrong with that. Alex the bisexual king he is wants them both and is confused ;)

As always thank you for reading :)

Chapter 5: 2 of clubs ♣

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was fair to say Alex did not hold up to the promise of showing up. He slept in and when he woke up the the sun in his eyes he jumped from his sleep and scrambled out of bed down the stairs and to the stables where Elizabeth was attending to the horses.

"Careful," she said with a smile, as she petted the creatures, "You'll frighten them."

Alex didn't know what to say he was still trying to force himself away to speak,"Ah um..."

Elizabeth furrowed her brows, "Are you alright?"

He swallowed, "Quite. Why?"

"Cause you're out here in your," she's holding back her laugh, Alex is looking down at himself. Sweatpants and vest, nothing wrong with it but she's smiling — no blushing. "Sorry, you just look so different with all that..." She's gesturing her hands at his arms and chest as if not expecting him to be fit underneath there.

Alex is grinning, he stepped closer, "Elizabeth Stewart are you checking me out?"

She's laughing, looking back at her horse then back at him and shrugging, "I might."

"Luke wouldn't like it."

"I don't care about what Luke thinks."

They are looking at each other and suddenly Alex forgot why he was panicking in the first place. Elizabeth turned back to her horse, "I um, I'm going for a ride to the beach, would you like to –"

"Yes..."

Elizabeth smiled, "Alright then." She stepped forward, leaning closer to him, "Go change and come back I'll wait."

He nodded, leaving so fast he hadn't catch the giggle Elizabeth gave him when she saw him dashed off.

-

The weather was — for the first time since Alex got here — sunny. His hair was blowing heavily in the wind, he's not accustomed to this type of terrain, only riding it flat fields occasionally a few low hills and muddy swamps and not rocky slopes with gravel and sand. His horse knew he was inexperienced and moved cautiously unlike Elizabeth who galloped so easily turning back to make sure he's catching up.

"You've ridden before, right?"

He awkwardly laughed, "Only just this summer actually."

"You're kidding."

"Nope." Then his smile turned into a frown as they kept riding on the shores of the beach. "My father all my life has been a busy man, spend most his life being my headmaster than an actual father." Alex jaw tightened, his hands are suddenly in a fist holding the reins.

Elizabeth reached out, holding his hand, "You'll scare the horse like that." He met her gaze as they continued to ride side by side, occasionally their horses swaying into each other.

"My father is the same," Elizabeth said after a moment of silence. She turned to look at him, "All our father's are basically like this, they are men of this secret club, they wish to have their heirs be apart of it and yet do not take the time to nurture us and care for us. They only care for the legacy."

Alex saw the way she seemed, sad and lonely, "You want to be your father's heir but your brother..."

"My brother wants nothing to do with him hence why he's in Birmingham with his mother. And my sister is with our aunt. I stay only because of my grandmother. My father had little time to parent me so she did instead, made me *her* heir hence why I am mistress of this household."

Alex was taken aback, "So you are your own father's rival?"

She smirked, "He can't get rid of me even if he wants to. When my grandmother died this summer, she left many instructions in her will." Elizabeth turned to look at Alex, "This is why they dumbed us all here you know, they're all together... somewhere. I bet in Wales in the Colbie's country house reading that will right now, contemplating on what treasures they are allowed to take for themselves and give to the British museum. My father would've loved to keep them all given what it would mean for us." Elizabeth studied him carefully, "You don't know much about the club, do you?"

Alex shook his head and Elizabeth smiled, turning to the wind to allow it to swept her hair back as she continued to ride, "Nigel knows the most. His father though abusive towards him and his mother doesn't try to hide the books away from him. Nigel knows a lot but he hides it from us."

Alex suddenly felt a pang of guilt. He doesn't know why but he has second thoughts, he wants to go back home now and perhaps to find Nigel and apologize to him for not showing up.

"Are you really going to go through with this engagement?"

Elizabeth turned to him, "I have no choice. If the rumors that Kathlyn said are true then I need it and so does Luke."

"Why does he need it?"

Elizabeth smirked, "Because he is *obsessed* with legacy as much as his grandfather and the rest of the men in this society. And for record do not repeat this back ever to him before he guts you open, his grandfather is an outsider, lied and fake his blood ties only after his married his wife Catherine, at some point he was to marry my grandmother but she saw through his deception. Now my father and his grandfather struck a deal simply because of this pretty little word call blackmail."

Alex was quiet, taking in her words and she went on, "Nigel's is not like the rest of us, it's partly why Luke admires and fears him, his

blood traces back further than you and I can imagine and not one outsider, can you believe it?"

"Outsider as in..."

"Well lower class of course but it's not just that, it's more than just that, it's the people who can trace their lineage to the fourteen century during the knights of the Templar, not just simple nobility, it's those knights who left behind their legacies for their sons and daughters."

Alex flinched, "Knights of the Templar?"

She turned to look at him, "Yes. You heard of the story."

Alex simply couldn't believe it. His father use to read him a boring book every night before he sleeps about knights who were accused for turning their backs on the church and then were killed even after confessions by order of the pope who was pressured by the King of France Philip IV.

He scoffed, "That fucking bastard has told me that story so many times that it's been grilled into my skull to the point I knew it more than any other world history."

Elizabeth smiled, "Then at least your father is training you for the order. There's more of course but that's all I know and I only know these things cause of Nigel." She turned her horse blocking his from going further, "He likes you you know. He doesn't have any friends, doesn't wish for them I should say but he's fond of you."

Alex felt his entire body plunged into ice, he's feeling his heart beating against his chest, he's warm and cold and confused all at once and he blinked, "I told him to stay away from me. I'm not particularly fond of him."

Elizabeth stared at him, her eyes up and down before nodding and turning away, "You should reconsider your words. You're clearly lying but I wouldn't say to whom."

Hearing she said that he suddenly felt offended but she's riding further ahead, more faster and he struggled to keep up until she's off her horse and they are close to a small sand cave looking out at the sea.

"Sit," she ordered, removing her gloves from her hands and sitting perfectly on the grass and sand.

He followed her, the sun in his eyes until he's underneath the cave and she's sighing out loud. "My brother, sister and I use to come here a lot and play when we were childern. Now they are all gone." She turned to look at him, "You have any siblings?"

"No," he admitted, pulling at the grass, "My mother died when she had me. My father never considered remarrying so I'm alone."

"Just like Nigel."

Alex flinched at that comparison, "What are you talking about? Nigel has his father and mother."

"Yes but his mother can't have any more children, he was cut from her and well the doctor said her insides were badly damaged, the pregnancy were hard, the labor hard. Nigel... Nigel is lucky to even to be alive. His mum is lucky to even survive too." She swallowed hard, "But his father sees him as disappointment even if his mother loves him, he's not what most would deem as manly as you can tell."

"You talk about him alot."

Elizabeth laughed, "That's cause he's my best friend as well as cousin." She tilted her head at him, "Are you jealous?"

"What?"

Elizabeth smiled, shaking her head, "Nothing I just thought... I know you and him..." She turned to look at Alex, "I think you like h—"

Alex cut her off, leaned in and kiss her without thinking much, he was panicking in the back of his mind, saw an opportunity and went for it. Elizabeth goes back, eyes wide as well as he's realizing what he's done. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry I shouldn't have –"

She looked completely mortified, almost as if she's going to start crying. Her voice is low, confused, "Why did you do that?"

"I panicked I'm sorry." Alex felt like he's going to cry too. "You've been flirting with me so I thought I could tell you I like you too –"

"By kissing me without my permission?" She touched her lips and suddenly pushes herself up from the sand. "I'm leaving."

"Lizzy I'm –"

"*Don't* call me Lizzy," she glared at him, "For the record yeah I was

flirting but that gave you no right, no right Alex." She raised her hand in defeat, dropping them, "I thought..." She shook her head, "Forget it.'

He gets up, "Elizabeth..."

She runs off to her horse and he goes chasing after her but he's too slow and in a few seconds she's off leaving him alone on the beach and Alex felt like to pull his hair out.

He's confused now. He felt like screaming and it's like there's an earworm stuck in his head cause all he's hearing is *Nigel, Nigel, Nigel* and he's cursing to himself, slapping his face as he goes on his horse and started galloping on back home.

-

Alex goes looking for Nigel, the Manor too big as he tried to find him in the places he knew he might be but to no avail.

Elizabeth was in the living room with Lionel crying in his arms as he spotted Alex coming towards them, "You!"

Alex raised his hands in defeat, "Listen I didn't mean to –"

Lionel punched him in the face and he goes back and Elizabeth screamed, "Lionel that was uncalled for!"

"You're crying, Lizzy. It was definitely called for."

"What's going on here?" Kathlyn said. She saw Alex on the floor and frowned at Lionel. "Why did you hit him?"

Lionel is quiet and so was Elizabeth before she quickly shook her

head. "Nothing," she said blinking, "No reason."

Kathlyn didn't believe her, she looked down at Alex, examining his face, his eye bruised this time now and as she touched it he pushed her away. She studied him carefully, "What did you do to deserve this, hmm?" She looked back at Elizabeth, "Should I tell Luke?"

"Absolutely not."

Kathlyn got up, "I'm going to tell him."

"Kathlyn *don't*," Lionel argued.

Alex saw everyone's panicking and suddenly he's annoyed and angry at them all, it was just a fucking kiss and a depressing one at that and Elizabeth was making a big deal out of a stupid thing but he didn't say any of that. He knew Luke will be more pissed at him and he was wasting time cause it's getting dark soon,.so he took a deep breath and spoke up loud for them to hear, "I can't find Nigel."

Everyone was quiet. Elizabeth looked down at him, "What?"

Alex avoided her gaze, "You asked me why I looked the way I did when I wake up. That's because I was suppose to meet him to go hunting in the woods and I never showed up and now I can't find him."

He finally looked up at her and she's horrified, "The woods? Hunting? Nigel doesn't know how to hunt."

"I do," Alex said, his heart was racing, "He wanted to see me kill."

Lionel and Elizabeth exchanged grave looks, they are both terrified. Kathlyn too, she goes running off for Luke now to tell him what she's heard.

"No one goes to the fucking woods alone, Alex," Lionel said, "Didn't you know that?"

Alex frowned. "I didn't know, no one fucking told me!"

"Common sense!" Elizabeth screamed.

"Then why would Nigel go alone in the woods!?"

"I don't know cause he's thinking you'll show up!" They were glaring at each other and she ran her hands through her hair, "We have to look

for him."

"I'm sure he's fine," Lionel reassured.

Luke was coming, running now to see Alex pushing himself up from the floor, towards Elizabeth who still was crying but for another reason entirely. "What happened, tell me?"

Elizabeth closed her eyes, shaking her head, "Ugh Alex. He and Nigel were suppose to meet in the woods to hunt but he never went and instead went with me out for a ride and now we can't find Nigel."

Luke turned at him, "You *left* him out there!?"

Alex was touching his face, gramicing, "Look I didn't *think* he would go out there alone, alright!"

"We need to calm down and look for him you guys, it's getting dark," Kathlyn said with more calmness than any of them.

Lionel nodded, "What Kathy said, come on you three, stop lingering around."

Luke was growling still though, looking between Elizabeth and Alex, "Why did you invite him out for a ride?"

Elizabeth froze, Alex wa staring at her wondering if she'll tell him the truth. "I thought the company would've nice, we were only talking."

Luke walked up to her, whispering, "Talking about what?"

"Nigel..." Alex admitted.

Everyone turned to looked at him, his eyes filled with tears as he stared at Elizabeth, "It's when I panicked and I..." He licked his lips eyes falling to the floor in defeat, "I remembered I needed to find him to make sure he's okay."

Elizabeth stared at him quietly, she and Alex seemed to be lost in their own world until Luke pulled her arm, "Is he telling the truth?"

Elizabeth blinked, still confused and lost, she looked up at Luke, then at Alex, nodding her head, "Yeah... it's the truth."

Luke turned to Lionel, "Brother?"

Lionel nodded, "I punched him because I saw Elizabeth crying I didn't

know why."

Luke turned to Elizabeth who had tears in her eyes and stained on her cheeks. "You were crying cause of Nigel?"

"Yeah," she said, her voice low, crying more as she looked up at Luke, "I don't want to lose him, the forest is huge but not only that there are traps out there set, snares for hunting as well as trespassers that my father and the men that work on the estate put out there. Hence –" she turned to face Alex, glaring at him, "No one goes out *alone* in the woods."

Alex lowered his head, "I'm sorry."

Luke turned to him, "Damn right you're sorry." He turned back to look at Elizabeth carefully, trying to detect lies in her words. She leaned into him, a way to throw him off her decite and Alex was somewhat impressed she knew Luke will give in and sighed into her, taking her in his arms to kiss the on top of her head. "Next time you're worried about Nigel don't go crying alone and panicking, come to me." He cupped her face, "You hear me?"

She nodded, her eyes flickering to Kathlyn who's staring at the two with absolute bitter rage. She turned away, pulling Alex along with her, "Come on idiot let's go find the freak."

Luke went after them, "Wait for me."

Lionel and Elizabeth remained, staring at each other in complete silence. Lionel watch the innocence of Elizabeth demeanor shifted, her tears gone and she's straight, somber without a hint of that panicked stage she had been currently before and it was honestly terrifying how good her acting was.

Lionel was impressed by her, choosing not to bring up what happened at the beach as she gave him a quiet look before dashing off to the rest of the group.

-

The search took them longer than they had anticipated.

Lionel and Alex teamed up together, Elizabeth, Kathlyn and Luke together as a trio. They had flashlights with them in case it gets dark before to head back home. The dogs following behind them with Lionel's Irish wolfhound tailing behind Luke and the girls while Luther and Alex's dogs went with him and Lionel. The clouds were darkening above them but that's only because a storm was setting in.

"Bloody hell, where could he possibly be?" Lionel said.

Alex was quiet since he came out here, he kept looking around but apart of him was also staring into the endless void so very defeated, the guilt eating him away.

"You shouldn't have done that."

Alex turned back to see Lionel walking behind him, looking more on the ground to see the tree roots and rocky bits so he didn't stumble over than up ahead. "You shouldn't have kissed her."

"I realized my mistake."

"Yeah you were hoping you can play with her feelings but Elizabeth is not that type of girl."

Alex turned to look at Lionel, suddenly it just dawn on him why Elizabeth reacted the way she did and why Lionel was so aggressive about it. "She's never been kissed before?"

Lionel frowned, "No."

Alex was suddenly amazed by the revelation, he found a bit of power from the thought he was her first though he had stolen it and for another reason entirely than he just simply wanted to kiss her. "She's hoping to save herself for Luke."

"Not hoping," Lionel replied, "She wants to."

"Why? He's a dick, he doesn't deserve her. She deserves much better than him."

Lionel scoffed, walking up to Alex, "My brother has been in love with her since they were children."

"Then why does he keep Kathlyn around? Why does he show Elizabeth he doesn't care?"

"Kathlyn is there because she wants to be," Lionel replied, "If Elizabeth admits even now under these circumstances she wants Luke he'll drop her like a that –" he snapped his fingers, "And they'll run off somewhere together and elope the second she turns eighteen."

Alex was stunned by those declaration, "So it's Elizabeth playing the long game."

"She's hoping to hurt him, yeah."

Alex paused, thinking turning to the woods with a furrowed brow, "Why?"

Lionel simply shrugged, "That you'll have to ask her. Girls are weird, I'm glad I'm not attracted to them that way, it saves me from a lot of headaches, not the heartbreaks though I still get that." Lionel was staring at him differently now.

Alex looked away, going more further into the woods and suddenly it started to rain and he's looking around him, "No, no, no, *no*! Nigel!" He dashes off running.

"Alex wait! Don't run!"

He's not listening, just kept on screaming, "Nigel! Where the fuck are you!? This is not funny! Come back! I'm sorry!" He's crying, "I'm sorry okay, I should've woken up earlier! I shouldn't have told you to stay away." Lionel was staring at him quietly as Alex kept talking and crying, he wiped his tears but it was really the rain blinding him, "I should've told you from the start I..."

Nigel was coming out the woods staggering. He looked so pale, his body moving sluggish. Alex felt his heart swelled, "Nigel..." He ran to him, nearly stumbling on a tree root before reaching Nigel. He cupped his face, looking around his body, "Are you alright, are you hurt?"

Nigel was quiet.

Lionel slowed down as he appoarched them. Alex touched his neck, the rain cold but Nigel's skin was hot against his the back of his hand, "Fuck you're burning up, let's get you inside."

Nigel looked up at Alex, his eyes glaring at him, "You didn't come, I warned you..."

Alex was nodding, he's still crying, "I'm sorry okay, I'm an ass." He hugged Nigel without considering anything else and Nigel lets him, "I'm so sorry." He let him go, holding his shoulders tightly, shaking him, "Why *the fuck* did you went to the woods alone if you knew I wasn't coming!?"

The rain fell and Nigel was smiling, his voice deeply soothing, "I told you... consequences." And he moved.closer to Alex, almost as if he's going to lean into him but he stumbled and fall and both Lionel and Alex reached out to hold him up. He's exhausted, probably drained from not eating and possibly not drinking anything. Nigel was being carried back by the two boys, with his arms spread over each of their shoulders until they made it out of the forest and Lionel told Alex to go ahead without him.

"I need to send a flare, tell the rest we found him."

Alex nodded and went on carrying Nigel inside, the rain still pouring heavily. He carried him up the stairs and into his room. Nigel looked like he was going to fall asleep and Alex couldn't let him do that just yet. "You need to get out of these clothes, they are wet and you'll get sick if you stay in them for longer than you already have."

Nigel didn't move and Alex went and touched the end of his shirt. He hesitated and Nigel looked up at him, eyes too tired, a bit dazed but is still anchoring Alex's stares, "Go on..."

Alex didn't move.

Nigel smirked, leaning forward, "Take off my clothes." His voice should not have been hypnotic but it was and Alex did was he was told though he avoided Nigel's striking blue eyes as best as he could. There's that playful shadow of a smirk dancing Nigel's lips again and it's annoying but Alex's too worried about him to be bothered, he got him a towel and three it over at him, "You're an idiot."

Nigel chuckled, deep and vibrant, it's making it hard for Alex to focus on reality. He still, watching up as Alex dried his hair and tried to dry his skin, "But it worked, didn't it."

Alex goes still, he didn't know what Nigel means. No, he's lying to himself, he knows *exactly* what Nigel means and he doesn't want to admit Nigel is right. So he ignores him and goes to find warm clothes, pajamas, quickly trying to put it on him avoiding his gaze once more, trying to look as emotionless as possible.

"Go to bed."

"No..."

Alex was pushing Nigel onto the bed, climbing on top of him, his hand pushing Nigel down but *he* doesn't *allow* him, Nigel snakes his way out and leaned in and plants a kiss right on Alex's lips and it stunned him for a second before he sees the smirk on Nigel's lips and he wants to wipe that smirk off, he wants to do it with his lips, to hear Nigel's moans.

Alex gave in and let's Nigel win. He kisses him hard, deep, not even caring about his own bruised lips from last night and Nigel was licking the bit of blood from his lips, whispering his name against the neck, like he's chanting a spell.

"Shut up," Alex groaned, hands finding their way at the back of Nigel's hair and pulling him to have his neck exposed he's kissing there feeling Nigel's own fingers combing through Alex's wet hair.

The door swung and Lionel was standing there and suddenly Alex pushed himself off of Nigel and across the room like he's been electrocuted. He's gasping for air and Nigel glared at Lionel who had his eyes averted away immediately as he saw what was happening. "Shit sorry my bad."

He dropped the glass of water and pack of tablets, "I brought this for the fever. It's Tylenol, be sure to take it okay before you sleep."

He's gone and Nigel watched as the door slammed turning back to look at Alex who was completely dumbfounded by what just happened.

What just actually happened?

Nigel kissed him

And he kissed Nigel back.

And things could've gotten way more intense if Lionel hadn't come in

and stop them. Nigel's on his elbows still smirking, dark eyes daring Alex to come on top of him again but instead he went and grabbed the glass of water and tablet handing it to Nigel who began to frown deeply.

"Take this."

Nigel looked up at him but he takes it and swallowed the water empting the entire glass cause he was clearly thirsty. Alex set the glass down, feeling Nigel's gaze boring in the back of his skull. He feels like he's spiralling.

Alex hands began shaking, he felt like he was having a nervous breakdown. *I'm not gay, why the fuck did I kiss him if I'm not gay*. He turned to look at Nigel who's studying carefully and Nigel's eyes widened again, he's reading Alex's mind again as he then scowled. "Get out."

"Nigel..."

"You heard me... Get. Out."

Alex listened, shutting the door of Nigel's room, resting his head against the wall besides the doorframe. "Fucking idiot." Alex looked up at the ceiling, "I'm a fucking idiot."

"Yeah you are."

He jumped seeing Lionel still standing there with his arms folded, leaning besides the grandfather clock that stood on the right wing corridor.

Alex studied him carefully, "What are you still doing here?"

"I was hoping to talk to you."

Alex turned away, "I'm not in the mood."

Lionel went up to him, resting his hand on his shoulder, "It wasn't a request." Alex looked down at the hand then up at Lionel and there was a sudden shift, Lionel seemed more like Luke in this very moment, it was chilling, deadly. "What do you want?"

"More like what do *you* want," Lionel replied.

"What?"

Lionel leaned closer, "You kissed Lizzy and now in less than twenty four hours you're making out with Nigel. I need to know what game are you playing."

Alex clenched his jaw, "I'm not playing any game."

"Then you want nothing more than to sabotage something, either slice a wedge between Lizzy and Nigel, or Luke and Lizzy or simply you just want to destroy yourself."

Alex was silent, he lowered his gaze, shaking his head, "Look I'm just confused."

"Then be confused with *other* people and not my family, Nigel and Lizzy are like my brother and sister, don't play any games."

And Lionel rest his hand at the back of Alex's head, feeling the way he flinched under his touch. Lionel tilted his head, "Such a shame. I'm honestly jealous." He smiled, turning away from Alex, going into his pocket pulling out a cigarette, lighting it before turning for the steps.

Alex staggered to his room, falling hard on his bed, it's been a long day and his lips are stinging, he still could feel the pressure of Nigel's lips on his. Cold and yet soft and he tasted rain, blood, spearmint.

He's suddenly feeling his body drifting off to sleep.

In his dreams, he's following Nigel into the forest, stopping him from going further in by kissing him and this time his dreams did what he was too cowardly to do in the waking world, he's giving in fully, completely, merging with Nigel without feeling any fear of guilt or shame.

Chapter End Notes

I was vibing half the time writing this fic while the other half was meticulously planned. I didn't think when they would kiss but this felt right even if we are on chapter 4.

There's a lot more to be done and Alex is a confused bi figuring out himself so there's that then there's um the whole murder bits here and there so yep, much more to go ;)

Thank you for reading :)

Chapter 6: 6 of clubs ♣

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Here."

Luke's hold out a mug of tea for Alex to drink and he was hesitant to take it partially because Elizabeth and Lionel was watching them and also because of everything that had happened from Nigel going missing, to Luke punching him, and Alex kissing Elizabeth (though Luke doesn't know that just yet) — Alex felt the guilt eating away in him.

"For fuck sakes I didn't poison it, now have it we've all been in the rain. Where's Nigel?"

"Sleeping," Alex said as he sipped the mug.

"He has a fever," Lionel clarified, "Probably due to the him being so long outdoors from since dawn with the heavy dew, then the morning sun and now the afternoon rain."

"Did he say why he was out there?" Kathlyn asked. Her eyes on Alex, waiting for a response.

He gave none, just drank his tea thinking. Maybe he should go upstairs to see if he's awake or if he's burning up with the fever still, just ensure he's okay.

"Hey!" Luke snapped his fingers in front of his face. "What's gotten into you? Don't believe this is your fault."

"It might as well be," Elizabeth whispered over her own mug.

Alex met her gaze and then he lowered his eyes feeling the pain and guilt. "I apologize, didn't I?"

Elizabeth lifted her chin, eyes hard, "It's not enough. You'll be lucky if he forgives you."

Lionel choked on his tea everyone turned to him. "What's the matter with you?" Kathlyn asked, her brows creased with annoyance.

"Nothing..." he replied looking at Alex who simply rolled his eyes.

Luke was glancing back between the two of them and suddenly he got it, "So he forgive you then, how lucky?"

"More than forgive, I should say," Lionel muttered and Alex slammed his mug down.

"Would you *shut it!*"

Lionel smirked at him, "Or what huh? You'll kiss me like you did –"

"Lionel!" Elizabeth yelled, panicked rising in her voice.

Alex without realizing throwing Lionel on the ground, impulsively punching the crap out of him. Luke doesn't intervene, he's simply laughing at commotion. Kathlyn leaned against the counter, her own eyes assessing everything with fascination as she played the conversation back over in her mind.

Elizabeth was the only one trying to get them to stop but to no avail. That is until Luke saw Nigel coming down the steps and entering the kitchen hall, he stood there green sweater hanging on him, his collar bones exposed, the contrast of his pale skin and rich colour was enough to grab everyone's attention.

"I couldn't sleep," he declared.

His voice soft yet holding so much weight. Immediately Alex halted, turned to see Nigel looking at him, head tilted, eyes darkening at the sight of Alex's bruised knuckles and Lionel's half injured face. Lionel coughs but he's grinning still at Alex as if it none of this bothered him one bit.

Alex came off of him, he's regretting lashing out but Lionel was being an ass and he knows it. Alex avoided everyone's gaze, his clenched and unclenched his shaking fist, his racing heart beating against his chest and he simply climb over Lionel and cross the space between him and Nigel, reaching out and touching his forehead, "Do you still have a fever."

Alex's skin was hotter due to the heat from his hands after the fight, they both know this, Nigel's blue eyes was staring up at him as he realized what he's doing and how close he was to and everyone else in the room.

Nigel frowned at him, reached and took Alex's knuckles, his thumb delicately brushed against the bloodied fingers before dropping his hand, "Do not touch me."

An arrow was shot immediately through Alex, he feels the pain and could not do anything about Nigel's command, the attention it had brought the entire room they were in. Luke chuckled, breaking the heavy silence, "Nigel, come have a cup of tea, you'll need it to keep warm."

Nigel quietly takes the cup from Luke and sipped it carefully, "Thank you."

Luke lifted his cup up before resting his hand on Kathlyn, "Let's go by the fire, maybe one of you idiots can play an instrument to entertain us."

Elizabeth scowled, "Play your own music, Luke."

He smiled at her, "No, the four of you are the reason we didn't have dinner tonight so I'm subjugating one of you to entertain me as punishment. Alex do you know any instruments?"

"Um... I can probably play the guitar and piano but I –"

"Good then you and Lionel together. He has his violin.

Lionel moved to the fridge pulling out a pack of ice, lazily wrapping it in a kitchen towel as he leaned against the counter right next to Nigel, "I'm not gonna play for you brother. I'm not your court jester."

Luke scowled at him but Elizabeth stepped in, "I will play with Alex."

Nigel frowned and Kathlyn looked between Elizabeth and Alex before turning to Luke who was clearly blissfully unaware of the tension between the two.

"Alright then, make sure he doesn't make any mistakes." And Luke was carrying Kathlyn by the waist as she turned looking over at her shoulder at the rest of them. Elizabeth and her made locked gaze before Lizzy turned away facing Lionel, she went up to him, yank the ice of out his hand and started scolding him.

Alex shifted uncomfortablely, moving to the sink as Elizabeth looked at him then at Lionel, Nigel stared at Alex who simply focused on the water running down his knuckles. Nigel glanced back down on his

thumb, he raised it to him lips and tastes it before whispering something into Lionel's ear with an impish smile.

Kathlyn had seen each interaction carefully before Luke nudged her to face forward and she does as she's already putting every puzzle in place.

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They all gathered by the fire, Elizabeth by the pianoforte with Alex. "How long have you played?" Elizabeth whispered softly at him as she flipped the pages of the music sheet.

"Uh," he gave a sheepish smile, "A while, actually maybe since I was twelve I don't really recall."

Elizabeth nodded slowly, "Then I'll lead and you'll follow."

He nod his head and they are practicing, just trying simply tunes and Elizabeth started smiling at him now no longer glaring or scowling at him and everyone was seeing their interactions including Nigel and Luke who showed expressed their distain very openly on their features.

Kathlyn glanced over at Lionel who was trying not to look at it all as he was mainly focused on his tasked at hand which was wrapping his marijuana with his cigarette. When he did look up he's frowning at them

Luke scowled, his voice raising, "Okay enough, Alex stop."

Alex looked his way and frown, "Did I do something wrong?"

"You're just not that good sorry."

Alex leaned forward at him, hand over the piano, "Well you would've known that hadn't for you cut me off earlier, I was going to tell you I hadn't played in a while and the guitar I didn't carry it with me here, my father didn't allow me."

Luke shrugged, "I don't care."

Elizabeth scoffed, "We're just warming up, Luke, he'll get familiar soon don't worry."

"I don't care, play by yourself from now on."

Elizabeth frowned and Luke tilted his head at her, "You look beautiful when you play, did you know that?"

There's a blush dusting Elizabeth's cheeks and Kathlyn scoffed, rolled her eyes.

"I know I am beautiful Luke, I don't need you to tell me that."

"No but you do need to hear it from me before some idiot tells you and you fall for them."

Elizabeth was quiet, she turned to Alex, whispering, "You should leave."

"But I didn't do or say anything."

"Didn't you hear me," Elizabeth replied, her eyes harderning now, she's again glaring at him, "Leave."

Alex frowned, he got up and walked away, moving to sit next to Lionel who handed him the cigar-weed he's been rolling up. Luke grinned, satisfied that he's won again but Elizabeth doesn't play, she's turning the sheets of music before sighing at herself and looking up at Nigel with a smile, "Nigel, would you join me?" Her hand rest delicately against the bench besides her and Alex turned to look at Nigel.

He's playing with his deck of cards, shuffling them with professional ease, why he has them Alex doesn't quite know but he seemed to be in a much fouler mood than before and Alex knew it was because of him. *Does he think Elizabeth and I were flirting just now?*

Alex couldn't deny he liked her, Nigel claimed so himself but there was a much prevalent individual wandering about in his head more

than Lizzy. Someone who took room there so quickly it was as if he's always been there and they hardly knew each other and yet, Alex could not stop being fascinated by him.

Nigel should know, he had been the one to kiss Alex, he should be able to know or maybe it was all a game, maybe he's just a simple prank orchestrated by everyone in the group, to fuck with Alex's mind as much as possible.

Nigel's eyes flickered up, the moment he met Elizabeth's soft gaze and sweet smile, he's no longer tense. He pockets his deck of cards into his sweatpants, "Of course dear cousin." Nigel got up, moving across noiselessly passing everyone, the weight of his presence as his body crossed Alex, crossed everyone for that matter was like a blackhole moving across space, he feels himself being sucked in, pulled in, there's no doubt the kind of power Nigel commanded, even Luke who's always trying to be dominant doesn't once reject Nigel. He allows him to sit beside Elizabeth as she smiled triumphantly to herself.

They are whispering to each other, Elizabeth telling him what they could play and he's nodding along pointing at the music sheet and then she smiled at him and her lips reading, "Ready."

And he nods, his fingers rest delicately on the white tiles before they began to move and he's playing the lower keys, deep tones. For now he's leading as Elizabeth's listening waiting for her turn and she goes in — she's softer tones, lighther and airy and they are matching each other's movements fluidly.

The melody starts off dark, heavy, terrifying and sinister just as Nigel appeared to be seen at first glance but then it goes soft, sprinkled with raindrops of soft, sweetly passionnate tones, there's grace, then it's wild again, careful, then tense.

Alex recognizes the music, he couldn't pin point the actual name of the piece but he knew of the creator — Franz Liszt another great composer during the romantic period.

And he's in absolute awe, he's leaning forward staring at the two, they were both so deeply focus on what they were playing, how they were playing and it was taken out of their own memories too as not once did either of them turn the music sheet and Nigel's gaze reached Alex's and there was a smirk there before he goes wild again on the keys, he's angry, it's clear in each notes but there's heartbreak there and

Alex could feel the knife twisting in his stomach, he feels guilt again but he doesn't really know why.

Suddenly at some point Elizabeth was no longer playing, she stops and watches as Nigel took control of the keyboard and everyone hold their breathe, including Alex and he's entralled by the beautiful sight of Nigel being so deeply lost as he's move his fingers, eyes closing in certain movements as he felt every single note. *It's like he's possessed,* Alex claimed. But by which entity he doesn't quite know for sure, Nigel looked so angelic as he's played the soft tones but when he goes wild and chaotic, there's the beast lashing out and he looked downright terrifying.

There's blinding, radiance, a magnetic pull, Alex could not look away and he dared not to in fear he might miss something of great magnificence from Nigel. Alex has convinced himself if Nigel showed his trueself, exposed the grace he's locked away from mortals, Alex would allow his eyes to be burnt out, never dare blinking or turning away. Nigel deserved all the attention he was captivating, perhaps even more.

Nigel had read his mind again, his eyes flickered open, on Alex once more and there is a tightness in his heart, a stirring in his stomach, the suffocation of his own clothing, his shirt collar strangling him, it's getting harder to breathe, he feels constraint and Nigel, Nigel just has this satisfied, cocky smirk and this back and forth between them carried on until he's finished, until he's holding each of everyone's weeping hearts in the palm of his hands.

There moment of silence then Lionel gets up and started clapping, he chokes on his smoke but there's signs in his composure he had been crying.

Nigel seemed pleased enough, sitting there unmovingly. Elizabeth knew what exactly she was doing asking him to join her only to abandon him mid-play, he didn't needed her. Nigel was perfect, he *is* perfect and Alex could not deny it.

"Well then..." Elizabeth rested her hand on Nigel's shoulder, gently leaning and kissing him on the hair and Alex feels uncomfortable, there's jealousy there stirring, envy and he doesn't wish to be misinterpreted by anyone around them. He's not looking at Elizabeth who goes towards Luke as he had his hand outstretched for her, she rested it in there and he plants a kiss on her knuckles caressing it — no Alex's eyes are on Nigel who's casually moving back to where he

was sitting, pulling out his deck of cards and shuffling them in place.

They locked eyes again and Nigel got up and turned away.

He's heading to his room, Alex thought. *He wants me to follow him.*

Alex was terrified to move, he knows there's no denying what his body wants and what his mind crave but he's still a coward who thought he could lie and tell the people around him he was just a simple boy with simple desires when they themselves knew the truth of him.

"What are you waiting for?" Lionel muttered, bringing the cigarette to his lips.

Alex turned to look him, taking it from, shakingly resting it between his own lips and breathing through his teeth, sucking the smoke before exhaling out his nose,

Lionel turned to him and smiled, leaning closer, "Go, before *I* take this opportunity as you being open for me to kiss you."

Alex was taken aback by that proposal especially given the violence Alex had taken out on Lionel. He looked as if he couldn't care less, the predator gaze is there and Alex was once again reminded everyone here was fucked up in their own way and Alex chuckled, feeling more like himself day by day.

He got and immediately goes dashing out of the living room, but before he disappears he heard Kathlyn asking them, "Where are they off to? To snag?"

"Why do you want to know?" Luke replied, "Hmm? Do you wish to join them?"

Kathlyn giggled, "If they invited me who am I to refuse. Right Lizzy?"

Lizzy said nothing, she's more looking at the back of Alex as he goes up the flight of stairs running towards her cousin. There's a shadow of a smirk tugging her lips, she knew she was right about those two, Alex was just an idiot to not admitted it sooner.

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The door was the only obstacles Alex had to face before meeting Nigel and yet it was the greatest opponent he's ever faced. He started contemplating whether he should turn away but he's reached this far surely he could do it.

"Ah fuck it."

He banged on the door and it opened up and Nigel was bracing his head against the frame and he's smiling though his eyes were still ice cold, there was nothing welcoming in his tone either, "I've told you to leave me alone."

"I can't..." Alex breathed, his heart beating against his chest, his body heating up, "You're in my head."

Nigel frowned, he straightened himself as he admitted, "And you're in mines."

They stared at each other. Alex moved closer, leaning closer to him, Nigel looking up eyes glaring at him, "I dreamt me killing you."

Alex wanted to laugh, he found it endearing somehow that Nigel dreamt him. "And I dreamt *you* killing *me*."

They kept staring at each other and somehow Alex was moving forward, Nigel stepping back and the door was being shut and no one was closing in the space between them, not yet anyways.

"You kissed her," Nigel whispered. His eyes looked like broken glass, they most certainly was cutting Alex open.

"Yes but in my defense —"

"Defense," Nigel scoffed, "You're a coward Alex."

Alex was quiet. He's clenched his jaw, "I barely know you, you barely know me."

"And yet you can read my mind perfectly," Nigel declared, closing that

space up, "And you chose to ignore what I want."

Alex looked down at him, "You want to see me kill. Why?"

"To see if you can prove yourself."

Alex leaned in, their lips barely a breathe apart, "To whom?"

Nigel smirked, his breath hit against Alex's skin, "Me."

And he steps away and moving towards his desk with the drawings and Alex doesn't know what more to say. He knows Nigel doesn't want him to kiss him, not yet, he has to prove himself first but how can he?

"Do you wish it to be a wild animal?"

Nigel said nothing.

Alex swallowed, "Do you want to be there, like you suggested or do you wish for me to just bring the prize to you?"

He said nothing again and Alex's angry, confused and just desperate. He goes up to Nigel, hands reaching for the back of his neck, "For fuck sakes say something?" *Please*.

Nigel just frowned and stays perfectly silent and Alex just pushed himself away from the tugging of Nigel's orbit. "I'm not doing anything for you."

"Oh Alex..." Nigel finally said. He revealed his deck of cards, showing the Jack of Spades and smiling at him, "We can never be as one if you refuse your title."

Alex looked at the card then at Nigel, "And what title is that?"

Nigel words are breathless, "Why the knave of course. *Jack*..." And he's looking at the card, "An unprincipled man. A rouge." He turned fully to him, "That is what you are?"

Alex swallowed, his heart racing at this new found revelation. "And what are you then, hmm?"

Nigel smirked, "Every man needs a weapon to defend himself." He walked across to him, resting the card in Alex's hand, "I'm the pike, your *spade*. And implement for killing." He moved up to Alex's ear, "You and I can be one for eternity if you give in."

Alex looked down at him, "You want me to use *you* to kill?'

Nigel smirked, "If that's what it takes."

Alex searches his eyes, he's insane, he's insane, he's insane. Leave, leave, leave. He'll be your demise. *No — he will be my new resurrection.* Nigel still had that amused smile, "Well... Jack?"

Alex doesn't know what to say, he can't truly get a good grip on his thoughts, Nigel's in there screwing with his mind. He stepped away, this isn't the same as just some summer fling, this isn't something as simple as him coming out to the world about his sexuality. It's more, it's sinister, it's evil and Nigel knows him too well and it's disturbing.

Alex was getting away again because he's a coward. He scrambled out of that room, slamming the door shut and going to his room and quickly, so quickly he's having a panic attack because he can't really think, actually *believe* he's indulging in this, in this fucking mad, insane boy.

Alex stared at himself in the bathroom mirror in his room, he's suddenly wondering if his father has ever been tested like this before. Surely something was wrong here?

Elizabeth words come to the surface.

Nigel knows a lot but he hides it from us.

Is this him revealing the truth of this world his father belonged to, that killing was the only way in? Or was this his sick, twisted version of the truth? Is Nigel misinterpreting his own father's words or was Alex misinterpreting his entire existence?

Chapter End Notes

Liszt: Sonata in B minor (Zimerman) — that was what Nigel was playing.

Anyways thank you for reading :)

Chapter 7: queen of spades ♠

Chapter Notes

Brace yourself, this is the turning point.

Some of the tags are gonna be applied here, maybe all the tags cause I didn't hold back.

Song for this chapter is State of Seduction by Digital Daggers

Hope you enjoy this chapter :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was a clear bright sunny day today and so the group decided they would go down at the beach.

Alex didn't know how Lizzy got Nigel to come along, he'd seem like a being incapable of enjoying the outdoors and probably was disgusted by sunlight hence his pale skin. Nevertheless he's coming along with Luther by his side — much to Alex's surprise but also silent satisfaction of seeing him even when he was too cowardly do anything but look.

Elizabeth used an umbrella, holding it out for both her and Nigel to use as they all walked to the beach, it was a distance for sure but with company no one felt it. Alex and Kathlyn walked in the middle of the group — Apollo and Artemis happily running besides him, knocking between their legs, every five seconds Kathlyn would turn to see Nigel and Lizzy hiding under the umbrella and would snickered to herself. She finally turned after a while, head tilting, teasing grinning at Nigel, "A little sun is good for you Nigel, you are so ghostly pale, don't you think?"

Elizabeth frowned at her, "That's just how he seems. Alex is the same way even with the sun."

Alex turned when he heard his name, "I'm not *that* pale."

"Not you," Kathlyn replied, "Lizzy's sister."

Alex doesn't quite understand but Elizabeth clarified, "Alexandria is her real name, we just call her Alex for short much like what people call me Lizzy."

Kathlyn walked up closer to Alex, hand around his arm which caused Nigel to immediately glared at her. She's leaning into his ear, though her voice loud enough for Nigel and Elizabeth to hear, "You should see her, Alex. Her sister is far prettier than she'll ever be."

"Shut it Kathy," Elizabeth snapped, though her voice sounded weak and frail as if she might actually be agreeing to it.

Kathlyn was enjoying herself far too much seeing Elizabeth's reaction, Alex could see that glint in her eyes, she thinks she's winning. "Make me," she retorted, then smirked, "Luke should marry *her* instead of you, at least we know she's not a bastard."

There's rage there again, Elizabeth wants nothing more than to walk right on over and yank that sorry good-for-nothing tongue out of her mouth. But Nigel was holding her back his voice calming her, "Don't give in."

Even with such a low voice, Alex could hear it all the same and he turned to Kathlyn, as flirtatious as she was to him, he takes her by her the hand and she's startled but doesn't pull away, then he's caressing the knuckles, looking at how small they were compared to his before looking up her and she's smiling wickedly as if she won another prize. He pulled her in by the waist, lips by her ear, there's a venom laced in his voice, "I can't speak on behalf of Lizzy's sister but I've seen Lizzy enough to know she's far more prettier than any girl out there."

Kathlyn met his eyes, her body was still and Alex turned seeing Nigel staring at the two of them, Elizabeth silently watching, her jaw clenched, there's fear in her eyes worrying that Kathlyn might use what Alex had said against her. "Don't you agree Luke!?" Alex added, he turned to look at the two brothers who were far ahead of the group in their own little world and in deep conversation oblivious to what was happening behind them.

On the mention of Luke's name he turned, "What did you say?!" He furrowed his brows at the sight of Kathlyn and Alex holding hands before Kathlyn yanked it away and goes up to Luke.

Alex smirked, walking halfway up to them, "I said don't you think Lizzy is far more prettier than any girl out there?"

Luke was staring at Kathlyn who shifted uncomfortablely and then at Elizabeth who was frowning. Luke chuckled, lowering his head and shaking it, "Yes I always tell her that she is."

Alex tilted his head at him, "Even more prettier than her sister?"

"Don't answer that Luke," Kathlyn hissed.

And Luke shot her a glare, looking at Elizabeth who's tearing up. Whatever there was happening between them it was all unraveling because of Alex words. Luke clenched his jaw and nodded, "The fairest one of them all. That's Lizzy for sure."

And Elizabeth's shoulders were no longer tense, she's looked like she's about to tear up as she smiled. Her eyes moving from Luke to Alex before turning to Nigel. She sighed heavily, "Well I think we ought to keep moving."

"Yes," Alex said walking ahead, whistling for his dogs to follow him. He goes towards Luke and Lionel, ensuring Kathlyn was seeing his glare and she's muted even as Lionel asked her what happened. She just shook her head and stared on ahead.

Alex turned back to see Nigel and Elizabeth talking underneath the umbrella. He can't read their lips but he could underestand Nigel just as much or even better than he understands himself.

"Is it just me or does Alex just look terrifying there?"

He hears Nigel's words to Lizzy as if they were being spoken in his mind, "He's changing... becoming who he's meant to be."

Nigel faced forward, his gaze landing on Alex. The private conversations they shared now was ringing in Alex's mind, he quickly turned away hearing his name called by Luke who pulled him into a conversation about his trip to Italy, one of those many trips his father made him took alone by himself. They talked about Rome, what's he's seen, the history of the structures and Luke was stunned he knew so much that he's carrying most of the conversation.

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They picnic near Elizabeth's sand cave. Her, Nigel and Kathlyn there inside as Luke, Lionel and Alex spent the time on the shores of the sea playing football as the dogs happily danced around them wilding with them, trying to catch the ball too. It was fun, every man for themselves and the waves were the goal which itself was funny but also hell to retrieve the ball when it was kicked far out.

This was an excuse for the boys to jump into the water, to race and grab hold of it. Though the sun was warm the sea was cold but it was refreshing, the salt air in the hair, the wet sands between the toes, the tension of the muscles loosening up after so long.

He's wrestling with Lionel for the ball right before Luke tackled him and chaos reigns, the dogs were even jumping and splashing the water everywhere, it made it haeder to see, the breath but it was all hilariously fun and exhilarating.

Alex was lying on the bed of the water, looking up at the seagulls overhead as Luke swam nearer to him, "What do you know of Lizzy's sister?"

Alex straightened up and watched as Luke stroke around him like some shark, but Alex's not intimated by him. He knows better, this was Luke's way of showing teeth when he had none, Alex had learnt enough about him to know Luke was just as much as a coward as he was.

"Only that I know she is pale like Nigel and according to Kathy that she's prettier than Lizzy but we both disagree on that, didn't we?"

Luke stared at him for a brief moment before. He stopped swimming moving closer to Alex, "Alexandria *is* beautiful in a different way." He said it cautiously as if he was afraid the wind might pick up and Lizzy might hear. Then he's smiling at Alex, "Lizzy is pretty cause of that mind of hers, her appearance does count but I suppose one would get bored just seeing a pretty face with no sort of intelligence coming out of those lips."

Alex tilted his head at him, "And yet you entertain yourself with the likes of Kathlyn?"

Luke chuckled, looking back at the shores seeing Elizabeth reading her book as Kathlyn was stretched out lying on the sand taking the sun heat while Nigel collected shells as Artemis sniff his fingers every time he picks up one. He smiled at the scene then turned back at Alex, closing the space between them. If it weren't for the waters and then holding up their weight, Alex would've been taller than Luke but here in the sea Luke and him was standing face to face.

"Don't think for a second Kathlyn is stupid, she just pretends she is to trap those like you. She likes to toy with people for fun, don't make her an enemy, Alex. She'll hunt you."

And he's off swimming leaving Alex alone to his thoughts. He looked back at the shore and saw Kathlyn staring at him, there's a smirk on her lips as she turned to Elizabeth as she reads.

"Is this where you and Alex kissed?"

Elizabeth goes completely still looking up at her and Nigel stopped admiring the shells he's found and looked up at her. Elizabeth's voice was shaking, "What did you just say?"

"You both came here alone on the beach, I wouldn't be surprised you two took the opportunity to make out without anyone walking in on you. Tell me," she leaned closer to Lizzy, "Is he a good kisser, did he use tongue?"

Elizabeth was appalled but her silence already had Kathlyn knowing her answer, "So the puritan has gotten her first kiss."

"Kathlyn," Elizabeth whispered through gritting teeth, "Be. Quiet."

"So I'm right then?"

"I never said you were."

"What's going on here?" Luke asked coming up to them.

And Nigel looked up at him before turning to Kathlyn and Elizabeth. His expression that of boredom, "Kathlyn is accusing Elizabeth and Alex of kissing here under this cave."

Luke froze and Elizabeth's eyes widened, hissing at her cousin, "Why would you say that Nigel?"

"Is it true?" Luke asked, his voice low and deadly.

Same time Lionel and Alex are out of the waters now. Elizabeth hesitates to answer and the tension has gotten thick and heavy. Luke turned to Alex, his voice still low, eyes red with rage, "You fucking bastard." He grabbed Alex by the throat, pushing him down on the sand and Alex struggled and tried knocking Luke's hand off of him. He managed to kick him, Luke falls back before tackling him again like a maniac and they wrestled until they were in the shallow ends of the sea.

Luke on top of him, hands on Alex's neck pressing him down as he chokes him. The dogs became wild, Apollo trying to attack Luke but Daisy (Lionel's dog) is fighting him bacm and pushing hin off of Luke as he kept holding Alex under water, "You kiss her!"

Elizabeth's yelling at them, her voice catching in the wind as they fought, "It wasn't like that! Kathlyn's lying!"

"Oh am I?" Kathlyn snapped, then looked at Lionel, "You punched Alex because Lizzy had been crying, and it *wasn't* because Nigel went missing."

"For fuck sakes Kathy, shut up!" Elizabeth yelled, going straight up to her face.

Kathlyn stepped even closer, their nose touching, "Make. Me." She grinned widely, "You simply can't. You don't have it in you. Too good. Pure." She spat in Elizabeth's face but Lizzy doesn't move, Nigel's up on his feet, Luther growling and barking at Kathlyn as he pulled her away and throws her on sand.

Lionel goes after Luke, pulling him off of Alex, urging him to stop but Luke's fighting him off pushing his brother away.

"You knew!" Luke yelled at him. Lionel stumbled in the water as Alex hurried to get up, trying to catch his breath.

"It wasn't like that."

"Then tell me how it was!" Luke yelled back. Then points a finger at Alex, "I told you to stay *the fuck* away from her! You can have them all, Nigel, Lionel, he'll even fucking Kathy but *not* my Lizzy."

"Kathlyn's lying!" Elizabeth yelled with tears in her eyes.

"The fuck I am! Luke, who knows what else might've went on! They probably did more! She's no longer good anymore. You can come out

of the deal with your grandfather, you can be free."

Luke froze, shakenly turning to face Kathlyn, rage boiling in him, "Is that what you hope for? For me to tell my grandfather what went down here." He walked up to her, Nigel yanked her up by the arm and she gramiced at his tight grip trying to fight him off but he held her for Luke, who grabbed her by the face, "You hope for me to what exactly, tell him I'll marry you instead?"

Kathlyn frowned, pulling from Nigel, "Don't touch me you fucking freak!"

"Don't you dare call him that!" Alex yelled running towards them, Artemis and Apollo growling and barking at her.

But Kathlyn was afraid all she did was smirked, "You want them both don't you, is that it? Lizzy and Nigel? You can't figure out which one you like the most. You probably fantasize all sort of nasty things with them, Alex you can't lie to me, you can definitely lie to yourself but not to me, I see what you are."

Alex was trembling, fear eating away in him, suddenly Luke's warning was making sense but it was too late for all of that.

Lionel close in on them, near his brother, "Let her Luke, she's not worth the trouble being angry over. Nothing happened between Lizzy and Alex."

"You'll lie for her," Kathlyn said to him, "You always would, wouldn't you Lionel?" She scoffed, "I bet if you weren't a fag, you'll already fuck her behind your brother's back. You love her just as much as Luke. Too bad you can't make your dick hard for her."

Lionel eyes widened and everyone was suddenly glaring at Kathlyn as she pushed a completely stunned Luke. Quickly she's stepping away from them, "I know each and every one of you, how you think and feel, you can't fucking hide from me." Her eyes flashed towards Nigel who's glaring daggers at her then at Alex's who's eyes were filled with boiling rage and fear flashed before her eyes, she's panicking as she looked at everyone else, "Stay the hell away from me!" And she ran off.

Luke called after her, "Myers! Come back here!"

He tried to ran for her but Elizabeth intercepted. "Leave her," she said, grabbing hold of him by the arm. She leaned into him, causing him to

go still, her lips touching his ear, whispering ever so softly, "Stay Luke... stay with me." Luke shivered at her words, he turned staring at her and Elizabeth leaned in and kisses him.

Everyone was stunned at the sight, even Luke but Nigel was smiling and Alex looked at him as he said every so slowly, "The Queen of Spades has taken control."

"What does that mean?"

Nigel had turned quiet and Alex moved closer to him, taking him by the arm, "What. Does. That. *Mean*?"

Nigel simply pulled away, "It'll be your turn soon, *Jack*." He moved away, eyes flickering from Alex to Lionel and he smirked at Lionel before heading back to the cave where he sat alone for the rest of the time on the beach.

-

The good weather didn't last for the rest of the day. Soon it began to rain and they had to pack and eventually ran back to the Manor.

At some point Elizabeth and Luke had ventured off alone together, hand in hand and for the first time Alex was seeing her happy and he wondered how long was it going to last before something goes wrong again amongst them again, before one of them spiral out of control and tried to hurt to other.

He was not hoping for it but he sensed the foreboding in the atmosphere. Nigel for one looked particularly happy too but Alex

knew it was for other reasons entirely. He's looking up at the rain clouds, slowly down behind them which made Lionel turned back and grabbed him by the arm, "You'll get a fever again, Nigel. Come on."

Nigel was grinning as he pulled away, "I'm alright. I want to stay like this."

"I'll be with him," Alex reassured Lionel.

Lionel looked between the two and shrugged, "Alright then, I'll make sure everything goes in, come on guys." He's whistling to the dogs and they all happily ran behind Lionel as he carried the bag of things they brought with them to the beach, going up the hill alone. Alex partially felt bad though Lionel didn't look too bothered which was good because Alex was glad he was staying behind with Nigel now.

"You could've stayed quiet!" Alex yelled through the rain, "Why did you tell Luke what happened?"

Nigel stared at him, "Because it matter why you did it."

"That kiss meant nothing," Alex admitted, walking towards him, the rain pouring so heavily he felt like if he screams Nigel still wouldn't hear what he's saying. "I panicked okay cause she was gonna say..." He lowered his gaze, hand clenched feeling so damn overwhelmed.

Nigel stepped closer to him, "I know Jack, you don't have to tell me anything when I know."

Alex raised his head, "What *do* you know? You can't possibly know how I feel? We barely *know* each other."

Nigel tilted his head at him, "Yet you cannot deny what's happening right now."

And this dance they were doing, back and forth, this little game as much as Alex loced it, revelled in it, it was becoming annoying. "Don't call me Jack," Alex replied.

"But you *are* him," Nigel said with a curl of a smile so darn mischievous and splendidly attractive, "Soon anyways."

Alex frowned, "My name isn't Jack, I'm not gonna be Jack."

Nigel frowned at him, rolling his eyes, "Must you always spoil the fun." He walked away and Alex reached out to grab him but Nigel

pulled away and ran back to the Manor leaning Alex in the mess of his own chaotic mind.

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A thunderstorm began brewing in the earlier evening. Lionel prepped dinner and Alex decided to help, the two seeming to find the silence between them a bit comforting – well at least for Alex, he rather like not having Nigel in his mind poking around and instead just focus on cutting up the carrots for the soup Lionel's making.

"Man I can't stand this," Lionel said, throwing his head back.

Alex looked at him, chuckling, "Can't stand what?"

Lionel turned and looked at him but just shook his head, "Nothing. You want some whiskey?"

Alex scoffed, "Where on earth are you gonna pull them from? Lizzy's not here."

Lionel laughed, "Elizabeth's father has some in the cabinet right there." He pointed at it across the kitchen hall and surprisingly Alex never noticed it till now. Lionel winked at him, "And I know how to pick the lock."

Alex grinned, "Then what are you waiting for?"

Lionel rest the wooden spoon down and patting Alex on the shoulder, "I know I could count on you." From Lionel's long hair, he pulled out a pin which made Alex chuckled at the sight not realizing that was how Lionel's been keeping his hair from not falling in front of his face, he just always assumed it was the hair products.

He saw Lionel stooping down in front of glass cabinet, lips pressed tightly together as he picked the lock, it took less than a few seconds before the door opened, so bloody easy it made Alex leaned forward completely impressed by Lionel tricks, "Okay man you gotta teach me how to do that."

And Lionel showed him, it was definitely not hard but it depended on the type of lock. He even went on explaining using pocket knifes on the door latch to open them and he had Alex practicing while they were drinking whiskey and watching the soup as it boiled.

Alex was already high by the time the food is done, he tried to eat to sober up while Lionel doesn't even bother to taste a bit of food, from his pockets he's pulling out a ziploc bag of something. Alex squinted his eyes at it, "What the fuck are those?"

Lionel snickered, "I followed Nigel once in the forest to catch rabbits and stumble upon these bad boys." He opened seal and pulled out one. Alex pick it from his finger, admiring it. It was a dehydrated mushroom, chopped into half and Alex sniffed it gagging at the smell as Lionel threw his head back laughter loudly.

"Try it."

Alex wrinkled his nose, "No thanks mate, I'm good."

But Lionel was insisting, pushing it to him, "I swear to you, the high is so worth it."

"I'm already high already," Alex replied but he felt himself already being tempted to at least try one. What it gonna do, kill him?

Lionel nudged him some more and Alex gingerly leans in and takes a nibble. He tastes it and he's surprised it's not bad, Lionel rolled his eyes, "Just bloody eat it, Alex."

"Fine!" Alex popped it in his mouth chewing and swallowing and Lionel chuckled leaning back against his chair.

"I don't feel anything?"

Lionel placed one in his mouth then a cigarette as he light it, he takes a deep breathe, exhaling out the smoke through his lips, "Oh you will."

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Alex did not feel anything kick in till he goes off to bed. After drinking a bit more with Lionel, the two sharing possibly three or more cigarettes that may or may not have been wrapped with marijuana — Alex wasn't entirely sure, he's feeling it all weighing him as he climbed up the stairs to his room.

His skin was burning, he's light, he's hot and he's cold.

But he's happy and *it's fucking wonderful.*

He felt like dancing but his limbs were so numb all he did was fall on the bed and stare up at the ceiling. He doesn't sleep, doesn't blink, he just stared up at the ceiling and he doesn't hear or feel anyone standing there by the door frame but someone was.

Kathlyn crawled up on the bed, moving nearer to Alex, cradling herself next to him and it doesn't register what she's doing till she's reaching down and touching him.

"What the fuck?" he pushes himself away, "What the hell do you want?"

Kathlyn raises up, tilted her head at him, her fingers circling the bedsheet, "I just want to talk, maybe even..." Her eyes were glinting in the light of the lamp, the smirk on her lips were quite suggestive.

Alex clenched his jaw, "I don't want to talk to you. Get out."

Kathlyn doesn't, instead she closed the space between them, hands still to herself, "They're fucking you know."

Alex goes still. He knows who's she's referring to, he had an idea it was probably happening since neither came down for dinner but only now was he imagining it so graphically cause of Kathlyn's words.

"I don't care about that."

Kathlyn leaned closer, lips hovering over his but never touching, the shadow of it was stinging though. Alex was having a hard time keeping focus, "Aren't you curious to know, to *feel*." She takes Alex's hand and rest it on top of her breast and Alex pulled away again, placed some more space between them, averting his eyes, blinking several times trying to remain focus, "Please leave."

"Come on Alex, you are the only one here I know will be willing enough to fuck me. Lionel's gay, Nigel's weird. So by process of elimination you're it. It's perfect, you and I, you get your revenge just as I would," she declared.

He met her gaze, "Revenge why the fuck would I —"

"Lizzy rejected you," Kathlyn said closing in the space again, slithering nearer like snake, "Even though I know deep down she holds feeling for you." Alex was staring right into those mischievous eyes of her, that villainous smirk, "Luke's taking her as we speak. You can take me." She leaned into his ear, whispering, "Pretend I'm her."

Kathlyn's lips were kissing his ear, his neck, soon licking and nibbling and Alex was having a hard time pushing away, the sensation both welcoming and strangely unpleasant and he hated how his body was reacting the way it was.

Without permission her fingers were moving down, reaching between his thighs and he's hard but not for her, he's not hard for Lizzy either though the thought of her was very prevalent in his mind it's not what constantly came to surface when he had nothing else to think of.

Kathlyn was massaging his cock some more as she tries kissing his lips and he's moving away his face, hand reaching to pull her away but she seemed stronger now, powerful.

"Come on Alex," Kathlyn whispered seductively, "Call me Lizzy and kiss me wherever you want, you know you want to."

Alex was reluctant to do as she says. It felt wrong — not just Kathlyn having her way with him but just thinking of Lizzy, imagining her that way, the way Kathlyn wanted him to. He's disgusted at himself, he

was thinking he was betraying himself if he did that, betraying Nigel again after he'd come so far being truthful about how he's feeling.

"Stop," he said.

But she's climbing on top of him and tried to move her hips on him, "*Come on* Alex, don't be shy." Then she leaned into his ear, "Or would you like Nigel or Lionel to join us. It could be fun."

He pushed her off of him and she falls back on the bed, "Get *off* of me."

Kathlyn was persistent, she doesn't back down. She grinned and keep moving in to kiss him, reaching for his pants, "*Come on*."

He grips the back of head, pulling her hair and she's smirking at him, "Yeah just like that. Come on Alex show me *who you really are*."

He's angry at her, he wanted to do more than just fuck her, he wanted to hurt her cause she was so fucking stubborn but this was wrong, this was all wrong and in his mind he's screaming for Nigel to come to him. Screaming for this to just stop but he's not in his right sense of mind to fight back.

She lifted up her shirt, exposing her breast, wanting Alex to touch her there, telling him to do it even when he just couldn't.

"Get the fuck off me Kathy."

She grabs him by the chin making him look up at her, "Stop being such a prune and fuck me Alex."

"I don't think he wants to."

Kathlyn jumped, pushing herself off as she sees Nigel leaning against the doorframe, hands folded. He's glaring at her, "Get out."

Immediately she goes running off the bed to the door avoiding Nigel's deadly gaze until she finally reached near the door she halted looking at the way the two boys were staring at each other and it all clicked, "You kiss her thinking she was him."

Alex was quiet, his body stiffened and Kathlyn scoffed, rolling her eyes as she stared up at the ceiling, "I'm surrounded by a bunch of fucking fags. God! What a waste of a pretty face." And she turned away, looking at Nigel one last time frowning at him before leaving.

Nigel closed the door and Alex shifted on the bed, trying to get his legs to the ground, to met him halfway, to thank him for coming but Nigel was faster, he pushed Alex back on the bed, cupping his face and Alex wasn't protesting, he doesn't even think it's real because truly Nigel was not kissing him as if he's been straved for days.

Alex's body was moving much faster than his mind, he gave in so easily, he too felt the thirst, the starvation boiling in him as if he'd been locked in a cell left without water and food for days. The taste of Nigel's tongue did not quench the raging fire that stormed Alex's body, instead it was like gasoline, it fumed and exploded and blazed high up, getting caught by the tornado wind spiralling in his mind, wild and chaotic and so very, very freeing.

There's a low growl escaping Nigel's mouth when Alex reached for the hem of his shirt, rising it up to touch his bare chest, to explore the skin underneath there. How long Alex had wanted to do this and *he's finally giving in.*

Nigel allowed him take of his shirt before Alex goes to take off his own. Nigel's lips moved to his neck, kissing and biting, the sensation harderning Alex and he's pressing himself against Nigel, moaning breathlessly.

"She told you to think about Lizzy but you've wanted to think about me instead."

Alex was shivering, it was so fucking hard to think, he's feeling his body arching to press closer to Nigel. It's hard to deny the magnetic plug Nigel had on him, the high seeming to just make it all overwhelming to the point Alex was certain his brain was short circuiting, his loosing his senses, his mind, but he tried to answer him.

"I can never get you out of my head," Alex retort, he was running his fingers through Nigel's richly dark hair, tugging hard at the nape of his neck, "I fucking love you in there."

"So do I," Nigel replied, his voice so smooth and husky, vibrating the very atoms that made Alex's body up. Nigel searched his eyes, "I heard you call for me."

Alex clenched his jaw, "How did you heard that?"

Nigel placed his hand on top of Alex's chest, right at the center, it was burning — Nigel's palm against his skin. Alex's heart hammering loud against his ribcage for Nigel to feel. "I want to feel your heart."

Alex was suddenly remembering the dream, Nigel on top of him like this and he remembered the dragger, Nigel cutting him opening and he braces himself. *So be it then,* he declared in his thoughts to which Nigel smiled amusingly.

"You would be a willing sacrifice for me."

Alex found himself smiling too, "I'll let you do anything to me if it would help control these thoughts I have of you."

Nigel goes still, his hand moved from Alex's chest, fingers tracing down to his abdomen, to centre of his stomach as if wanting to reach into Alex's belly to touch inside there, to feel every vital organ: his liver, his kidneys, his stomach — and Alex would let him if Nigel wanted to.

He was having a hard time trying to separate reality from imaginary, apart of him thinks this isn't real. He's conjured up Nigel like many deep twisted fantasies he'd long buried deep within his subconscious but another part of him knows this is real, it felt all too real to be made up especially when Nigel reached down at the hem for Alex's sweatpants, pulling and exposing the rest of his lower half to the cool air.

Alex gasped as he sees the way Nigel's blue eyes sparked, like flashes of lightning. It's truly maddening, Alex was overcome by these wild, chaotic thoughts, he wants to panic in this moment but that embrassment of being naked before another in this way had been numbed away by every substance that consumed for the night.

Lying so naked before Nigel, Alex is reminded he's only ever kissed girls before, fingered them as they fisted him but everything else was just imaginative, he's never stepped this far, never felt another's lips on the tip of his cock the way Nigel's warm mouth was, taking him without a moment of hesitation.

Nigel's tongue licking so methodically and attentive, every slow, meticulous stroke sent Alex on edge. He looked down to see if once more he was imagining it all again but instead he saw Nigel so deeply engrossed by his task and for the love of god he's never seen someone so breathtakingly etheral, so beautiful in such a preverted, sinful sight.

There's no God here in this room, he's hearing Nigel say with his feline predatory gaze as he stared back up at Alex. *There's only us, you and I. Together.*

And those words allowed Alex to let go of the internal shame he's been feeling, to not hide his fantasies of wanting Nigel. It was more than just having sex with him, he knew deep down it was so much more because with Nigel it felt like there will always be more. He's taking Alex's soul, binding it with his and it's tied together in a red thread and heaven's above he felt like he was going to come any second with all just this act of intimacy alone.

Alex gripped the pillow with one hand, gasping for breath as the fingers of his other hand combed through Nigel's hair, he gripped him and the moans Nigel was making was so lascivious, it was intoxicating.

"Nigel..."

Nigel lifted his head, "Oh *Jack*, you look so completely *undone*."

He felt undone. He felt helpless to it all and he didn't wanted it to stop.

He allowed himself to relish this, to not feel the self-disgust he's long felt knowing how he's grown up. He tried not to think of his father, or his friend's back home like Josh and Raj. Not to think of the punishment he's long heard God would do to him if he's gave into his carnal, heathenistic desires. *There's no God here*, he's hearing again. This time from himself and Nigel is smiling at him, "Yes Jack, allow yourself to be true, it's freeing, isn't it?"

"Fuck me," Alex commanded breathless, begging, '*Please*'. He didn't think these words would've ever left his lips and yet here he was shaking, thrilled, ecstatic and eager. Nigel was looking at him, trying to detect decite. "You're not ready, you haven't yet transformed."

"I don't care about that," Alex replied, leaning forward, reaching out and holding the back of Nigel head, he leaned, bracing his head against Nigel's, licking his own lips still gasping for air, "I'm transforming right now as we speak. Don't you see?"

Nigel was quiet, he still was cautious and suddenly he's blushing, "I've never..."

"Neither have I..." Alex replied with an airy laughter, he felt as if he's going to cry, "But I want to... with you."

Nigel nodded, he's still thinking as if truly deciding. He kisses Alex's again before going back down *again*, his tongue exploring the opening

of Alex's hole. The entire feeling itself was so new, wild and crazy that Alex couldn't stop gasping, he's clinging to Nigel's hair the only anchor to this blissful, strange feeling. The sensation of his tongue caressing him gently and tenderly. Alex was so entralled he hadn't realized Nigel was inserting a finger until the burning sensation happened and it causes him to pull away just slightly before Nigel kisses the tip of his cock again, sucking as he fingered him.

Alex was going crazy, he wanted to come, his body could not bear another second and it's confusing, he don't know if to move forward into Nigel's mouth or away from the burning of the fingers. He allowed his mind to relax, to savour every feeling, to admire Nigel from this view of him.

"You're so fucking divine." Alex is staring up at the ceiling, "Maybe you *are* the devil."

Nigel goes up and kisses him hard, Alex this time takes control and tastes himself on Nigel's tongue. *Yes the devil, he's the devil and I've bargain my soul to him.*

Alex felt Nigel near his opening, he slowly presses in, the burning was painful, he's clinging to Nigel's head, kissing him hard to the point he knows his lips might've been bleeding into his mouth. He was cursing with every thrust but Nigel doesn't stop and he doesn't let him. It's strange but it's right, Nigel too looked absolutely undone by what was being forged between them. Alex at some point switched roles with him, he's on top, worshipping Nigel as he's meant to be, showering him with kisses, bathing him with his tongue.

"Jack..."

That name, that name spoken by those lips, Alex devoured and consumed that name from Nigel's mouth.

They were a tangled, coiled mess by the end of it.

Alex doesn't remember half of it, but he feels completely euphoric, his body lighter than it's ever been before and Nigel in lying on his sweaty, burning hot, and Alex laughs, gasping still for breath as he kisses the top of Nigel's head, a bubbling laughter escaping his lips.

He hears a whisper, he's not even sure if it was his lips it came from or Nigel's.

This is it, we are one now, united forever.

Sleep pulled Alex in faster than ever before as a storm brewed outside, it comes hard, it comes without care or remorse and it comes for them all.

-

"Alex, Alex?"

Alex opened his eyes, it's pitch black except for the torchlight shinning in his eyes, he freaks out and pushed Nigel off of him. "What the fuck, get off of him?"

Nigel was thrown back across on a tree root, a confused look on his face as he tilted his head at Alex who was just realizing where the hell he was.

He started to panic, what the fuck was he doing in the forest?! He pushed himself up, stumbled a bit, nearly walking into a tree before he tripped on a log. He fell face down and groaned, the high coming down and he feels like absolute shit. He pushed himself up and turned locking gaze with wide, dead eyes of Kathlyn Myers.

"Ah!"

He falls back, *that wasn't a log, that wasn't a fucking log!* "She's dead? She's dead, she's dead Nigel."

Nigel casually got up from the forest floor and fixed Kathlyn's body back where it was, as if it was a lifeless doll. Alex was completely horrified, he sees she's dead, freshly dead, her body was silt from neck go down to her abdomen, her gut and ripcage spread open and it's all exposed, her entire insides decorated on forest floor, her heart resting in her palm and Alex's stomach was cleanching, he felt sick, so sick,

the metallic, burning, gagging scent of blood on thick in the atmosphere. He looked down and his eyes widened seeing his hands, his clothes wad covered in blood.

He started crying, "W-what? How?" Alex was shaking in fear, he turned to Nigel, the only anchor to the mystery of what had happened but Nigel doesn't shed light on it, instead he just stared at Alex as if he's disappointed in him.

His voice was soft though and calm which helped Alex's mind, "What do you remember?"

"I - uh - I was drinking with Lionel, we had - we had fucking mushrooms and weed and," he wipes his face with his hands, big mistake the blood goes on his face and he gagged but doesn't throw up, "Nigel..." He goes up to him, "Did we? Did we kill her? Did you force me to kill her?"

Nigel tilted his head at him, "Is that what you believe?"

"I don't know what *the fuck* to believe!" Alex shouted, "We're in the middle of the fucking woods! What the hell happened!"

Nigel was silent, he looked down at Kathlyn's body, it's covered in moss and leaves and mushrooms — which had to be Nigel's doing, plucking it nearby to decorate her body. If Alex hadn't been panicking he would say she looked like a painting come to life, perfect in every way and form but he's losing his mind right now, he can't appreciate the mortifing art when it's a fucking real, dead corpse of someone who he knew.

"I remember she coming into my room, tried to um..." He swallowed, his tongue feeling heavy, his lips dried, "She tried to force me to have sex and then you came to stopped her."

Nigel turned, he's searching Alex's eyes, there's a long pause, the silence so thick it's making Alex nervous. Then he finally asked, "And?" He moved closer, his voice deep as the ocean, hypnotic, "What else do you recall?"

Then Alex lies, feeling a sudden shame and embarrassment now, "That's it. I don't remember anything else."

He was hoping Nigel would speak up, would tell him the truth of it but Nigel only nod his head, looking up at the moon above, the rain clouds once again setting up. "We should go, get you out of those

clothes, burn them if must."

"How?" Alex asked.

"Leave that up to me." Nigel reached out, fingers caressing the nape of Alex's neck. The sensation calming his spiralling mind. Nigel slowly leaned in and Alex blurted out, "Did you kill her?"

Nigel halted his movements, tilting his head once more, his eyes playful, full of mischief, "Is that what you *think*?"

Alex was quiet, he stared into Nigel's blue eyes, they seemed almost inhumane. He swallowed hard, shaking under Nigel's touch, "Did *I* kill her?"

Nigel straightened up, fingers gripping his hair, "Is that what you *believe*... Jack?"

Alex cries, "Please don't do this, *don't do this now*, don't form riddles in a time like this?!"

Nigel smirked, "Then perhaps next time you shouldn't take anything to hinder your senses."

And he turned away, walking over the tree roots, heading out of the forest and Alex looked back at Kathlyn's body, staring at it one more time as she stares right back at him. He thought he saw her blink, he panicked, running after Nigel in hopes he'll catch up to him and get more answers.

The Manor is dead silent, Nigel silently took his clothes — shirt, sweatpants even his underwear and lets him take a shower. Alex lingered in there longer than he should, allowing the water to cleanse what has transpired to his body.

He tried to will himself to remember what happened after Nigel and him had sex but it was just blank.

The blood ran down the sink hole below and he thought of Kathlyn's corpse, why did Nigel cut her open like that? Was it to pretend that a beast got to her and ripped her apart? Alex's mind was all over the place, his body aching him, he felt the pain of their intimacy, every kiss, bite mark, scratch, every bruise that was made between his thighs. He's amazed he's still standing.

It had been his first time and if he had to be honest with himself he

barely remembered half of it.

Nigel however should've remembered so why didn't he tell Alex they slept together?

Did he regret it?or was he just hoping Alex would realcsll and save him the explanation? How was he suppose to look at Nigel now and not think about his lips on him in that manner, the taste of him, the feeling of their body pressed together in that manner? Why the fuck did he let Nigel fuck him when he always wanted to be the one to have Nigel spread out on that desk of his that he uses in his studies and take him there.

Alex swallowed, his thoughts were being too shameless. He's suddenly hard but it was all wrong, he willed himself to not do what his body was craving to do but he's going to do it anyways. He's thinking of Nigel, he's thinking of the events that lead up to having Nigel in his room and in him, it makes his mind wander to Lionel, to Lizzy, to Kathlyn and he suddenly goes still, he's seeing himself holding her down and choking her but he doesn't know if it's real or just imaginative, he sees Nigel coaxing him, whispering in his ear to tell him how to strangle her so she wouldn't breath but he also wouldn't break that neck of hers.

And Alex was still not stopping, he's on the edge, it all fucking sickening and disgusting and when he comes, he hates himself, he's crying, he felt like to throw up, he does in the sink before washing it down and wiping his mouth.

When he comes out of the bedroom Nigel stood there and they stared at each other and it's hard to reach his thoughts, Alex realized Nigel is blocking him out maybe he's nervous. Maybe he thinks Alex would betray him.

"Are you okay?" Alex asked, though it should be the other way around cause he felt like shit but Nigel doesn't seem to care.

Nigel doesn't say anything, he just stares at Alex who goes searching for his clothes, his body still damp from the shower, his hair dripping wet and the towel loosely wrapped around his waist.

"Are you alright?" Nigel finally asked.

Alex sighed, dropping his towel and putting on his clothes. Nigel stared at it all and Alex sort of liked he was at the centre of his attention. "Fuck no, I feel like shit."

Nigel smirked, he goes up to Alex and it's like nothing had happened at all, there was no corpse lying dead out in the woods waiting to be discovered with the perpetrators in the room because that was it, wasn't it? Even if Alex didn't remember what had happened, he would not let Nigel take the blame for anything, he'll protect him, he'll try his best to save them both even if it meant abandoning this life.

They kept staring at each other for so long, Alex finally gave in and rest his forehead against Nigel's temple. Eyes closed together, Alex laced his fingers with Nigel's, his lips trailing the crown of his head, "Stay with me tonight..."

Nigel slowly nodded, he's shivering under Alex and it was such a riveting sight. Their eyes locked and Alex kissed him, wild and hot yet it was so tender and pure and Nigel surprisingly was pulling away.

"You need your rest Jack..."

"I wouldn't be able to sleep."

"Try."

Alex studied him for a second, he sighed, giving into the order, "Only if you stay then I will try to sleep."

Nigel smiled at him, he lets himself be pulled in by Alex into the bed, they shared a kiss once more, Nigel grinning as Alex leaned down and buried his face into his neck, breathing him in.

The bloodied scent was on Nigel but it wasn't bad, it suited him somehow.

"Jack..."

"Hmm..."

"No one can know."

Alex swallowed, "Of what?"

Nigel looked up at him, "You promise to protect me right?"

Alex quickly nodded, "Of course."

"Good," Nigel replied, "And I'll always protect you."

Chapter End Notes

Congratulations Nigel and Alex for being my first gay smut post (I am a nerve wreck cause I'm beating myself over this, I don't usually write smut cause I can't keep a straight face nor am I ever comfortable but I'm getting use to it!)

Believe it or not but that song I picked out was actually found after I wrote majority of this fic and when I stumbled upon that gem I was like okay I need to put it cause ain't no way I'm missing this opportunity.

Anyways thank you for reading ;)

Chapter 8: queen of hearts ❤

Chapter Notes

Song for this chapter is Burning Pile by Mother Mother

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"The two of you look like you've been dragged through the mud," Luke said as he handed both Alex and Nigel a cup of coffee.

Alex looked at the kind gesture then at him and he almost forgot Luke had just twenty four hours ago or less nearly drowned him in the shallow water of the sea.

He took it nevertheless, chuckling to himself as he replied, "We've been up all night."

Both Elizabeth and Luke both looked at Nigel and him, Alex for the most part was blushing, he didn't meant it like that but it sure came across like that but he supposed it was better for them to think that instead of what actually happened.

Luke grinned, a cheeky one that showed his one dimple, "No doubt about that and..." He winked at Alex as Elizabeth made herself tea, Luke threw his hand over her shoulder, "So had we, mate."

Elizabeth rolled her eyes as she sipped her cup, "Please you were passed out right after the first round, I had to wake you for the second."

"That's not true."

"It is," she snapped back teasingly, "You sleep like a baby Luke."

"It's cause of the storm last night, the rain for hours last night, lightening and thunder, the best kind of weather for sex." And he goes and kisses Elizabeth's cheek as she lightly pushed him away blushing.

"Can I not hear about any of your bed affairs so early in the morning," Lionel groaned as he dragged himself to the coffee maker, pouring himself a cup, "I'm the only one from this wrenched group who hasn't been laid this entire summer."

Alex laughed which doesn't earn him a good look from Lionel but

there's an endearment there, they were friends — all of them and for the first time he felt like he's found his people, looking at Nigel sure confirmed that.

"Maybe I can call father to send someone," Elizabeth replied, teasingly, "Perhaps my brother Jon?"

"Or you know," Luke cut in, "You suck it up and pretend Kathlyn's a dude and fuck her instead. I'll let her wear some of your clothes, it'll be like self-incest."

Elizabeth pushed Luke, "You're fucking disgusting, Luke."

He laughed, drinking his coffee, "What? It's better than Jon who's an idiot."

Elizabeth said nothing, Lionel just keep sipping the hot beverage, grunting to himself. After a short pause of silence Luke was looking around, "Where the fuck is Kathy? I haven't seen her since what happened on the beach."

Everyone was silent and Luke frowned eyes landing on Lionel, "Have you seen her?"

Lionel shook his head looking at his coffee cup, "No I didn't. I even made dinner and none of you came down. Only Alex but of horny idiots."

Elizabeth laughed, "Don't call us that."

"It's true though."

Alex found himself sitting closely to Nigel, he tried to be casual of it, leaning over the counter, pretending this was the best spot to view everyone who was speaking in the kitchen but he was just making stupid excuses. Their elbows touched and that itself felt more powerful than anything from last night especially given they were around people. Alex stared at his cup of coffee as Nigel drank his quietly besides him, neither of them said anything to each other since before they went to bed hours before dawn.

The thought of Kathlyn, the mention of her name, knowing her corpse was out there in the damp forest was poking needles through his skin, he's uncomfortable but he tried to let himself appear anything but.

"Maybe she's just sleeping," he suggested.

"I'll go check on her," Luke said, moving but Elizabeth held him back.

"Don't go."

"I'm just going to wake her up, it's already noon."

Elizabeth looked like she was about to cry, "Don't go Luke, stay..."

"Give her some more time," Nigel spoke up, his deep voice always magnetically pulling the attention onto him, "If she doesn't come down before the evening we can go check on her."

"Perhaps she's angry with you," Lionel declared looking at Luke, "I would be if I got dumped in the middle of summer with nowhere to go. Now I have to tolerate my ex with his fiancé."

"She wouldn't tolerate it for long," Elizabeth whispered.

And they all turned to her and she took in a deep breath in, "Our parents are coming back, the will has been read. The Order has decided what they will be keeping from my grandmother's collection and what they will be doing with her title, her lands and her money officially ending this purgatory by the end of this week."

"I rather like this purgatory," Luke admitted, he's grinning at each of them.

"You're the only one who did," Lionel grumbled.

Alex had to disagree on that, he thought he would hate every moment of it but he actually rather enjoyed himself, far more than he had this entire summer. He wants to reach out to hold Nigel's hand but he's scared, ending this imprisonment meant also saying good bye to him, what's going to happen when they had to face the public world.

Alex was too afraid to know, too cowardly again.

-

The afternoon came and Luke was getting restless, drumming his fingers on the couch, checking the time on his watch. Alex noticed how uneasy it was and how everyone was soon getting bothered by it even Lizzy who's foul mood was on display, she's rolling her eyes every time. Alex even saw the way Nigel was glaring at Luke, like he wanted to him.

Alex just fucking snapped, "Go and fucking check on her then! Jeez!"

Luke jumped, looking at him stunned for a second as Alex just leaned into his seat making himself comfortable as he went on reading the book Nigel loaned him. Luke turned to Lizzy, to see if she'll object but her expression is tight, she just holds her hand out as if saying, 'What are you still doing here?' Immediately he goes dashing up the stairs.

His brother scoffing at him as he slightly tapped the bud of his cigarette.

They heard banging up the stairs, Luke was shouting Kathlyn's name and it made everyone tense, Alex most of all.

It's nearly evening they wouldn't be able to search for her in the forest till tomorrow unless they all agreed they needed to and if Elizabeth calls the police or their parents, then it will be from evening till late into the night or perhaps morning they might find Kathlyn's dead body.

Luke came running down the steps, "She isn't there?"

Lionel frowned, "What do you mean she *isn't* there? I saw her went upstairs last night?"

"Yeah well you're always high on shrooms or weed Lionel you see curtains move and thinks it's a person."

Lionel wasn't even objecting, he just shrugged and Alex found himself lightly chuckling at the two brothers. Elizabeth got up, brows furrowed, "If she's not there then, where could she be?"

"The greenhouse perhaps?" Nigel suggested.

"She doesn't have the keys," Elizabeth replied.

"The forest?" Alex found himself blurting out and they were all looking at him as if he's grown three heads but he's confident he's playing the game right.

"The forest?" Luke replied then scoffed, "She's not that stupid."

"I don't know," Elizabeth declared, "They really do say empty vessels make the most noise."

Lionel laughed, "Can't argue there. We're in this mess cause she wouldn't shut up yesterday."

Luke clenched his jaw as he looked outside, "It's going to be dark soon?"

"Yeah we can't go out there?" Elizabeth declared.

"But we'll be together, all of us," Luke replied, "Plus we have the dogs, they could help."

Elizabeth frowned, "You like her that much, huh? Is that it? I know you care about me only because of my bloodline but jeez Luke at least act better about it."

Luke walked up to her, "My sweet Lizzy I care more than just your blood, I also care about that what's between your legs."

She slaps him and Lionel threw his head back laughing, even Nigel cracks a smile and Alex chuckled. "You deserve that," Lionel said, placing the cigarette in his lips.

Alex could see that she was shaking, he got up and went over to her, hand on her shoulder, protectively, "You're a real dick, Luke, you know that."

Luke shot him a glare, "Oh so now you're her knight in shining armour?"

"No but she clearly likes you otherwise she wouldn't tell you to stop looking for the girl who she knows is competing for your affection!"

Luke goes still, he's surprised at Alex and Alex was surprised at himself but at the corner of his eyes he was seeing Nigel smiling in approval, that glint in his blue eyes gave Alex all the confidence he needs. He holds Elizabeth, pulling her to where Nigel and he was

sitting, "It's already late. Kathlyn is a smart girl — you claim as much, if she doesn't come back we call someone. I don't know, perhaps your dad," he said the last part to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth goes still, "My dad is not someone you'll wish to call."

"Then our grandfather," Luke suggested

"That's even worse," Lionel replied.

"And my dad's a dick too," Alex said with a slight smile, "He's the headmaster of my school, I wouldn't be surprised he gives us all detention for this."

Everyone turned to Nigel who was silent during the whole conversation. Elizabeth spoke up, "Nigel's father is a terrible man but his mother perhaps."

"Neither of them are a good idea, Lizzy, you know that" Nigel whispered.

"Come on Nigel," Elizabeth begged, "Don't be like that."

Nigel frowned, he saw the way they were all staring at him. Stiffening his shoulders he nodded grimly, "Alright, if she doesn't come back before night fall we'll call my mother." The group seemed to finally relax before he adds, "But my mother is always around my father. He'll soon find out, maybe the moment we call her."

Alex met his gaze, "Then we brace ourselves for the worse."

Luke stared at him, "Which is?"

"That something terrible has happened to Kathlyn and they'll think we're somehow responsible."

Lionel frowned, "That's mad, I would never hurt Kathlyn."

"He never said we killed her you idiot," Luke replied, "Only that he meant we're somehow responsible. There's things in the woods."

"What? *Squirrels*?" Lionel laughed, "Any thing that's out there that could kill was hunted down to extinction years ago."

Elizabeth falls silent, her eyes on Nigel, before she goes saying, "Yeah but there's also traps set, my father has placed many in the woods. Remember how we all panicked cause of Nigel being out there, why

are we out there?"

"So now you want us to look for her?" Luke said raising his hands up in defeat, "Honestly women are so confusing."

Elizabeth pursed her lips, "Well if it means we find her rather than sit out our asses sure, plus it'll save us from calling parents. They'll think we aren't responsible enough."

Luke rolled his eyes, "You are the only one who cares about responsibility and approval from your parent Lizzy, the rest of us... We couldn't care less."

Alex was actually agreeing with Luke. He sighed, this was the only way ahead, best face it now, "I'll go get my dogs."

Nigel's gaze flickered up at him, he got up, moving, ready to follow Alex and there was no more discussion about it, the group all collectively agreed they'll take the dogs to go look, not splitting up but following Kathlyn's scent from her clothes.

Alex was once again amazed at himself at how calm he was, it was partially due to the group, everyone seem at ease unaware of what lies ahead, except Nigel of course who doesn't even look at all bothered wor worried, the same as ever.

Does he not worry I will say something?

Nigel turned to look at him and Alex goes still, swallowing the anxiety raising in him as he held out his hand and Nigel takes it as Alex gently caressed his knuckles, "Keep close to me would you?"

"Why Jack?" Nigel said in that flirtatious low toned, a mixture of honey and venom which always had Alex spellbound.

"I'm afraid you'll run off again," he whispered, playful though it was serious cause he *was* afraid Nigel would abandon him in the midst of all of this, "As punishment."

"Do you deserve to be punished?"

"Oh for the love of God, you two!" Luke called out, which had Lionel and Elizabeth laughing.

Alex ignored him, ignored all of them and kissed Nigel in front of them. A declaration that he was not afraid to be his true self in front

of them.

Both Elizabeth and Lionel are clapping at the kiss as if it was a wedding and Alex blushed before seeing from the corner of his eyes Luke straying from the path they were taking. He frowned, yelling after him, "Luke!"

The dogs bark and started chasing after Luke. Alex was beginning to have that knife twisting in his gut again and they stumbled upon Kathlyn's corspe. The rain and sun and the moisture in air seeming to rot it far quicker than anticipated. There's red ants crawling around her face, bettles and flies. Luke stands there completely still and Lionel fell back stumbling over a tree root, holding his mouth gagging before turning away and throwing up. Elizabeth stands there petrified, walking up to the corpse, her body shaking, "She's dead."

Luke staggered back, he turned to Elizabeth then to the rest of the group, eyes meeting every one of them, "We need to do something."

"Who do we call?" Lionel asked wiping his mouth. He's gasping for air, looking like he's ready to have a panic attack, his face pale and blue, still sick at the sight. Nigel pities him and goes down to rub his back gently to which he muttered a 'thanks'.

Alex moved forward, standing besides Luke, looking at Kathlyn then at him, "Did you do this?"

Luke's eyes goes wide, he scoffed, "What? No?"

"Then how did you know where the body was? You stray from the path, we were going that way," Alex replied pointing north east, "You came this way, why?"

Luke clenched his jaw, moving forward, "I didn't kill her. Matter of fact I think it was Nigel who did it." Nigel met Luke's gaze completely silent and unshaken by the accusation, oblivious to the spiraling fear Alex was experiencing cause of it. Luke went on, "Look at the corpse, it's a work of art. We all know Nigel is good at cutting things open and look at her, she looks like she's craved right open."

Nigel simply smiled, his composer clam and demure, his eyes flickered to the body then to Luke, "Kathlyn does look beautiful dead." Nigel stands to his feet, "But I think it's Elizabeth."

Elizabeth goes still, everyone turns to her even Alex cause he's suddenly wondering if Nigel was hiding something from him cause he

did black out half of last night. Elizabeth frowned, "Why would I even kill her, Nigel?"

He stepped closer to her, "She disrupted your court, your grace. She became your King's mistress." Elizabeth scoffed, looking at Luke then at Nigel glaring at him, "I don't give two shits about the two of them. And Luke is most definitely not my King."

Nigel smirked but Elizabeth flickered her gaze to Lionel, "It could be Lionel."

Lionel was taken aback, "Why the fuck? You *see* me throwing up at the sight of the body and you're pointing fingers at me?"

"Could be guilt," Elizabeth claimed with a shrug, "You're always high, maybe you killed her on accident."

Lionel frowned, "I can't believe you Lizzy right now."

"She did call you a fag," Alex replied candidly, "Claimed if you weren't one you would've already slept with Lizzy."

"That's not enough motive."

"It's motive enough," Luke stated then turning to the corpse, "She really looks better this way."

Lionel got up to his feet, "Alright since we're all pointing fingers, let's go back to back to the source. Alex it was you, wasn't it?"

They all look at him, even Nigel and he goes still, "Me? Why would I?"

Lionel walked up to him, "I wasn't going to say anything but I saw Kathlyn going up your room last night."

"You were probably high, Lionel," Elizabeth said.

"No, no, she definitely went up to his room," he said then moves closer to Alex, "What was she doing in your room?"

Alex frowned, realizing they all know now he was the last to see her alive and it was not a good look. He turned to Nigel, was this apart of his plan all along? To frame him? Alex took a deep breath in and allowed himself to be vulnerable in front of them, averting his eyes to the ground, "She tried to force yourself on me." His eyes watered looking up at Lizzy, "Wanted me to imagine it was you I was sleeping with while she pictured me as Luke."

"Jesus Christ," Luke turned to Kathlyn's corpse, "You really are a crazy bitch Kathy."

Elizabeth scoffed, "Took you this long to realize."

Luke turned to her then at Alex, then at everyone else in the group, "Regardless of who it was. You all had your reasons."

Elizabeth turned to him, "What?"

Luke met her eyes, "You heard me." He looked back at Alex again, hand reaching out and holding the back of his head, bringing Alex's forehead to his, resting his hand on the centre of his chest at his beating heart, "She shouldn't have done that to you. It was wrong."

Alex was shaking, he turned to look at Nigel who's features were completely expressionless except the glint in his eyes, urging him to go on, perform for the crowd and Alex breaks down while Luke hugged him tight, patting him on his shoulder before letting go and cupping his face. "I understand why you got nervous to tell us." Then he turned to everyone else, "We burn the body."

Lionel eyes went wide, "You can't be serious?"

But Luke was already going for sticks and twigs, "Oh I completely am."

"But we have to tell someone," Elizabeth argued.

"To get us all questioned, *interrogated*."

"None of us killed her though," Alex claimed softly as he watched Kathlyn stare right up at him, her heart sitting on the palm of her hand now filled with holes created by insects and worms.

"Yeah but no one will *think* that."

"Could be something out here," Lionel replied.

"Are you fucking *kidding* me?!" Luke stormed up to him, "You just said back at the Manor there's nothing deadly in this forest and I don't know if the drug's fucked with your head Lionel but that's clearly not done by any traps set by Lizzy's dad."

Everyone was silent and Alex was nodding, agreeing with Luke, "So we burn her."

Luke nods back, "Yeah." He smiled tilting his head at him, "Make it

seem she ran away, I'll add some of my money in there and some of her clothes."

Elizabeth was looking around her, still shocked at each of them, "You really all are going through with this?"

"Yes Lizzy," Luke said mockingly.

It made her rolled her eyes.

Nigel's even nodding, "There will be no proper case with a missing body."

"Bingo." Luke handed Alex some twigs and sticks, "Her parents will think she ran off. Wouldn't be so bad, only us five will know the truth."

"Her teeth will remain," Nigel claimed making all of them look at him weird.

"Then we find a way to hide them. Throw them to the sea or something I don't know."

"We still need to call someone," Lionel said, "They'll wonder why we hadn't called the moment she disappeared."

"Lionel has a point," Elizabeth spoke up realizing there was no way out of this.

"Then we call my mother tonight after the burning," Nigel replied.

Alex nodded, "We call *all* our parents."

Luke clenched his jaw, he seemed to disagree but nodded his head anyways, "Alright we do that then."

They gathered the twigs, dry leaves, sticks and whatever they think was capable of burning and tossed them on Kathlyn's corpse. Luke and Alex are the ones that went for Kathlyn's things, both decided what she would pack or left behind and he fished out a stack of notes from his drawer and they went to the kitchen searching for gasoline before heading back to the forest.

Alex's dogs following them, dancing around Luke as he chuckled at them, looking down at them grinning widely, "Looks like they like me now." He looked up at Alex as he gave him a small fainted smile.

Alex was feeling light headed, dazed at the fact that they were really going this. Luke tossed Kathlyn's things into the fire, Alex then throws the gasoline at her body and before Luke goes to light the flames Lizzy grabbed him by the shoulder, "Wait!"

He turned to her annoyed and then he saw she's holding some bluebells. Luke froze, "What are you doing?"

"She deserves some flowers at least, this is the best I can find in little time."

Luke stared at her as if she was crazy but he didn't say anything and neither did anyone else object as Elizabeth rest the flowers in the other free hand. Alex swallowed, what a sight to behold, the heart in one hand and the flowers in another and Kathlyn stared at each of them coldly.

"Should we say something?" Lizzy said as they stood there watching Luke hold out some leaves to burn with Lionel's lighter.

He laughed, "Like what, so long Kathy, you were a bitch, sorry we killed you."

"We *didn't* kill her," Lionel argued.

"My bad," Luke replied, "Sorry we don't feel sorry you're dead." She stared right up at him and for a moment Alex thought she was going to rise up and strangle Luke to death, carry him down with her.

The flames engulf in a blaze like hell fire, burning so hot it was hurting Alex's eyes. The stench of her body now as it burn was enough to make them all start coughing and gagging, except Nigel who seemed all so use to it. He's actually smiling, his eyes on Alex, the flames dancing in his dark pupils, he looked completely villianly there and yet Alex could not look away. He actually smiled back though it was faint, barely visible to the eyes. He tried to be as grim as everyone else, pretend, pretend, pretend so no one will know.

The bones cracked, the flames flickered and dance. Luke pokes the body and instantly it's breaking down, Elizabeth turned away, going into Lionel's arm, burying her face in his chest. Whatever she was thinking she tried not to express it as much as possible, only ever nodding at whatever Luke was saying to the group.

It suddenly dawned on Alex now that it didn't matter who killed Kathlyn, whether it was Nigel or any of the rest of them, they were

tied by this now and that seemed to be Luke's intention all along.

Luke met Alex's eyes the two holding each other's gaze before Luke leaned into Nigel and whispered something in his ear. Nigel looked up and met Alex's gaze and then nodded at Luke. Whatever had been spoken was agreed upon and it made Alex tensed up.

"Now," Luke finally said after the body's long been burning for nearly three hours, it was already dark, crickets chirping all around them, fireflies emerging out of the woods dancing around them now that the fire was slowly dying away. He tossed Lionel the lighter, "We have to swear we don't tell anyone."

"I think that's easy enough we're all accomplice now that we got rid of her body," Alex replied.

Lionel tensed up, shoving the lighter in his pocket, "You can count on me brother, I wouldn't say anything."

"Yes I don't trust that you will."

Nigel drew a switchblade from his pocket startling everyone except Luke who simply held out his hand, "We do this the old fashion way."

Elizabeth's eyes widened, "A blood pact? Are you insane?"

Luke tilted her head, "So you believe in them? Good? All the more reason to do it."

Luke pierced the point of the blade on his thumb and pressed into it, he gramiced, biting onto his tongue holding back the curse as he held out his thumb over the nearly outed fire. Then he handed the blade to Elizabeth, "Your turn."

She stared at the blade then at Luke, taking it in the palm of her hand. Her eyes on Alex then on Nigel and Lionel before she did the same as Luke, the blood falling in the fire as the low flames sizzled just a bit, smoke raising up. She handed the blade to Alex, then from Alex to Lionel from Lionel to Nigel and they all copied the same act.

Luke smiled, "Good, we're done here, let's go back to the Manor. I'm starved."

"I need a drink," Elizabeth muttered to herself too, biting her thumb, " A strong one, vodka."

"Make that two," Lionel replied as he hekd out his hand for his dog to lick it.

And the three walked up ahead as Nigel and Alex lingered behind. Nigel stood there, staring at the body, "I promise Luke I'll wait behind for the teeth and dispose of them myself." He turned to Alex, "You'll wait with me?"

"Of course..."

The two stood there by the fire as it slowly die away leaving nothing but ashes and cinders. Alex held out his torchlight, shinning it for Nigel who poked around with his stick to gather the teeth.

"Careful," Alex said as Nigel reached down to picked them up and placed them into his pocket.

Nigel smirked at him, "You're very considerate Jack."

Alex rolled his eyes, a smile tugging his lips before he held out his hand for Nigel to take them. He didn't though which caused his smile to break in a frown. "Something wrong?"

Nigel studied him for a brief moment, his eyes staring at his face. "Take off the torch."

He did and Nigel reached out and held his face, the ashes on his hand were now on Alex's cheek, his neck as Nigel caressed his face, pulling him down for a kiss. It was soft, tender until Alex found his insides stirring, Nigel always had a way to bring out this wild feeling from within him.

"You've done well, Jack."

Alex swallowed, "They suspected us."

"*We* suspected *each other*."

"You pointed at Lizzy, why?"

Nigel smiled at him and Alex reached out, touching the hair by Nigel's ear, he needed a cut soon, so did Alex for school. "You know you can trust me."

"I know..."

"Did you really kill Kathlyn or are you lying to cover the one who

did?"

Nigel stared at him, "Does it matter?"

Alex was quiet, no it didn't matter because now they were all in this together, before it was Alex willing and ready to do anything for Nigel and now it's the entire group willing to do anything for each other.

He knows he wouldn't get the truth out of Nigel yet so he bids his time for now.

"Come on," Alex said, motioning with his elbow, "Let's get going."

Nigel followed him, they don't walk side by side instead Alex was ahead as Nigel lingered behind, his hand touching the truck of every tree. Alex soon saw Luke and Lionel lingering behind waiting for them outside the woods while Elizabeth was ahead.

Luke gave him a smile (he's smiling a lot at Alex and he doesn't know why) and one who think the events of yesterday didn't happened with Luke trying to strangle him under water — strange how quickly things change especially during the summer.

Luke threw his hand over Alex as Lionel walk along with Nigel. "I doubt anyone's gonna fly in early tomorrow morning, want to do some hunting before our parents arrive?"

Alex scoffed, chucking at the question as if they didn't just burn the body of Luke's ex just a few hours ago and Nigel hadn't just retrieve the teeth of the remains. "You're kidding?"

"Shooting something clams me down actually. I'm like Nigel without the weird dark aura he's got going for himself."

Nigel shot him a glare earning a laughter from Lionel. Alex turned to look at him and smiled, "Well you could never be him anyways."

Luke studied Alex for a second, then glanced at Nigel then back at him, chuckling, "I think your right on that, mate. So what do you think?"

Alex sighed, shrugging, "I did promise to do that with Nigel." He gave him a side glance, "I suppose this is my last chance."

"No need," Nigel replied, his voice always magnetically pulling the attention on himself. It's why Alex was so fascinated by him, "You've

already proven yourself enough."

"Oh by killing Kathy?"

Alex flinched turning to Luke as he said that then laughed throwing his head back, shaking Alex's shoulders. "Or was it in bed, hmm?" Luke was waiting for the answer, tilting his head playfully at Alex who wanted nothing more than to punch him in his pretty face.

"You're a fucking dick Luke I swear," Lionel said and he elbowed Alex, "Come on let's leave him alone."

"What? Are you *kidding* me? It was a *joke*?"

"No one's laughting Luke," Alex muttered, moving away,, hands in pocket. He motioned for Nigel to come and he does, Nigel smirking at Luke who's suddenly pissed, "What the fuck so funny, huh?"

Nigel just continued to stare at him for a bit before he fully turns his body and joins Alex and Lionel up ahead.

Chapter End Notes

So I had the idea of leaving Kathlyn's body found until the search party and the police shows up but then I placed Alex, Nigel and Luke and this happened lol

No body, no solid crime ;)

Hehehehe ~

Anyways thank you for reading <3

Chapter 9: 9 of spades ♠

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Nigel gave Elizabeth his mother's mobile number. She rang it using the only phone in the entire house, the landline in Elizabeth's father's study, where she was the only one accessed to it.

"It's ringing?" she said, blocking the mouthpiece as she looked over at all the boys.

Luke nursing his vodka on ice, Lionel taking another pull of his cigarette, Alex drinking his tea and Nigel searching Elizabeth's father's library.

He pulled out a red leather book and she swatted his hand, "Don't touch that."

He frowned at her, "You have the book right here and yet refuse to read it."

Elizabeth frowned, "I'm not allowed in here, even though I have the key I'm only allowed to use it for the phone if need be."

Luke scoffed, "Come on Lizzy not once have you tried looking? There's no cameras anywhere, no one's gonna know."

Elizabeth glared at him, "I'm not a very good liar, Luke. My father would know."

Alex doubted that, she was probably lying right now about being in here, she probably came in and hid away many times to read and pretend the space was her's. Maybe she was afraid to look inside.

"What's the book about?"

"Our legacy," Nigel claimed turning right back at him.

Elizabeth scoffed, "It's a fairytale."

"It's not." Nigel opened his mouth to say more but Elizabeth shushed him as the line was picked up, "Hello, Mrs. Colbie, this is Elizabeth Stewart. Yes... Yes I'm fine. Yes Nigel is quite fine too." Elizabeth

turned to look at him and Nigel scowled moving away from her and going by Alex to sit down.

Alex took the chance to offer him the cup of tea he brought for Nigel who hadn't sip it yet.

Nigel took it, looking up at Alex still with that scowl but there's more there. Alex always sees it, his gaze though seeming cold and there was a flicker of fire, warm but still far to reach and Alex was willing to try to reach it, perhaps touch it even and allow himself to be burn.

Elizabeth wrapped her finger around the cord, smiling, "Mrs. Colbie that sounds wonderful, but I'm not calling to ask about my father and what's happening at my grandmother's will reading. I just wanted to know if you're available to come here... Yes it's an... Well that's the thing I don't know if it's an emergency but you see..." She turned around so the boys didn't see her. Alex leaned forward, staring at her relaxed posture. Elizabeth's proving here and now she was a master at decite. "Kathy's gone. Left we don't know when but we realized only dinner she's not here and her stuff are gone and so is some of Luke's money and... No, none of us carried a mobile, we were not allowed phones here... Yes we tried searching for her in the woods but she wasn't there."

She turned now to look at then and Luke met her gaze before she glanced elsewhere, "You see we called you because Nigel knows you're reasonable. You will understand. It wasn't our fault... Okay... how soon? Tomorrow? Sure and I'll tell Nigel what you said hello, sure no problem, bye Mrs — I mean Aunt Helen." She presses the phone down staring at it for a ten long seconds.

Suddenly there's clapping and Elizabeth turned to see it was Luke, shaking his head, holding up his glass of vodka, "Fucking brilliant, you should be an actress, Hollywood will love you."

She rolled her eyes, "It's easier to lie on the phone when they can't see you're nervous."

"You don't look nervous to me," Alex replied.

Elizabeth stared at him, taking a deep breath, "Well I was, my hands are shaking." She held it out and it was. Alex without thinking reach out and touch it and she flinches before letting him hold her hands, gentlely squeezing, "You did well then."

There's a tug of a smile on her lips, "Thank you Alex." She turned to

Nigel, "Your mother asked how you were."

Nigel was quiet, eyes on their clasped hands and Alex let go before Luke also turned to noticed. "What else?" Nigel asked, eyes looking up at her.

"She says she misses you and that she's glad you're making friends."

Luke chuckled to himself and everyone shot him a hard look as he shrugged, "What it's cute, I didn't meant to laugh in a bad way Nigel you know that truly."

Nigel said nothing he just got up, "I'm going to bed."

"I think we all should," Lionel muttered though he wasn't getting up, already completely stoned.

Alex leaned down and patted his shoulder, "Come on buddy, before Lizzy drags you got of here."

He grabs hold of Alex's arm, nearly stumbling on him. Alex catches him, smiling as he fixed Lionel's hair, "Jeez Lionel you need to stop it with the shrooms."

Lionel stared at him, completely dazed, "Can't help it, you are very pretty Alex."

And Luke was laughing again, Elizabeth frowned at him, "Quit with the laughing and get out of my father's studies."

"Ah the Devil's daughter, oh so obedient."

"What the fuck is that supposed to mean?"

Luke pushed himself off the couch, fixing his posture, "You know exactly what it means." He shook the glass with bare ice, as if blaming his loose tongue on the liquor but everyone knew it was just his excuse to be a dick.

"Come brother," Luke said, grabbing him by his shoulder and pulling him from Alex, "Let's get you to bed before you either make out with Alex or worse throw up on his face and I don't know which one Nigel will kill you for?"

Alex laughed, he found it funny, cute almost the way Lionel was staring at him. Nigel who was already out of the studies was still standing there in the hallway seeing and hearing everything. He

locked gaze with Alex before turning away. The look he gave him was as cold and threatening as pre-usual but there was no flicker of warm light. He was pissed and Alex didn't know why.

Elizabeth moves nearer to Alex when they were alone, hand on his shoulder, "Hey you okay?"

"Yeah," he said shifting to turn to face her, hoping her hand would drop. It doesn't.

She studied him carefully, "I'm so sorry."

Alex snickered, confused, "For what?"

"What Kathlyn was trying to do to you."

Alex frowned, "It doesn't matter. Nigel stopped her."

"Nigel..."

He nodded, eyes averted, "I couldn't, I was..." He took in a deep breath, mockingly laughing, "I did say no but..." He licked his lips, "Guess apart of me must've wanted it."

"That's not how that works," Elizabeth argued, "If you said no, she's meant to stop. That bitch."

"Well she's dead now," Alex replied, giving a fainted smile, "Karma and all that."

Elizabeth looked at him, he thought she might scold him but she laughed, she laughed and it was an air melody and he found himself laughing too as she went in and hugges him tightly, a bit too long he found but he didn't wanted to think about that. When she did let go, she was staring at him, "You're a great guy Alex."

He raised his eyebrow, "Where is this coming from?"

She lifted her finger, "Let me finish."

"Yes your grace."

She smirked at him, liking the title given. She held his hand, squeezing it lightly, "Don't break his heart okay. I've never seen him this... is happy the right word to describe him?"

"I don't know," Alex found himself admitting.

"Contended then maybe."

No, contended was wrong. Nigel was not contended, he wants more from Alex but Alex has yet to find out how much more.

"If I break his heart I would have none left of mines," Alex replied, he gives her small weak smile, "He'll probably cut it open."

Elizabeth chuckled, "Yeah you're probably right."

And they stared at each other for a moment and Alex was about to step away, to go up and find Nigel but Elizabeth moves forward the same time and leaned in resting a kiss on his lips. It's shocking but he allows it, apart of him always did wanted to kiss her like this and she knows that and now she doesn't have to fear anymore with Luke being hers but it's confusing. Why was she doing this when she just said he shouldn't hurt Nigel?

Alex pulled away and she's standing there, lips pressed together. He frowned, panicked now cause of what this might mean, soon the words were coming out their mouths like the reflection of what happened at the beach.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry I shouldn't have –"

Alex stepped away, horrified, his words barely a whisper, "Why did you do that?"

Elizabeth moved closer, "I..." She took a deep breath, eyes filled with tears, "Luke confessed something to me."

Alex scowled, his heart hammering his chest, "What?"

"He told me that..." She reached out, her finger touching the strand of his hair in front of his eyes, but when they lingered for too long he grabbed her by the wrist and she immediately realized what she was doing and dropped her hand. "He admitted if it weren't for the engagement arranged between his grandfather and my father — well all that blackmail actually — I would've been engaged to you instead."

Alex goes still, shaking, "*What*?"

Elizabeth nodded, "My grandmother wished as much. Your father is my godfather, at some point my mother was going to ran off and marry him before..." She's trailing off now, eyes blinking back her tears, "Sorry I... I need to go."

Elizabeth ran off, leaving Alex alone in the studies and he looked at the library shelf, where Nigel had been earlier and picked up the red book.

Alex headed up to Nigel's room. He was surprised to find it unlock but also he was surprised to see Nigel not by his desk but by the window ledge, bare feet, wearing just a white vest and black sweatpants. He's frowning as he looked out the window.

Alex moved forward him, taking a seat next to him, "What's this about?" He gestured to the red book.

Nigel looked up, he looked angry, "You don't know?"

Alex would be lying if he said he didn't. He saw his father had one, actually took a few times snopping around in it but he never realized every member of the society had one, not until Nigel had pointed this familiar red leather book. "It's a record," he said, "About every member of the family that joined the society."

Nigel nodded his head, "It holds more than that. It's has secrets."

"What kind of secrets?"

Nigel leaned forward, eyes now wild, the blue seeming to spark like lightning, "Eternal power, a way to destroy the evil in this world. We are knights Jack. You and I, so are Lizzy, Luke, Lionel."

"Not Kathlyn," Alex whispered.

Nigel scoffed, "She's not even supposed to *be* here, Luke brought her for fun Elizabeth claimed as such, to get under her skin. Lizzy always believed Kathlyn held something over Luke's head, we just don't know what it is?"

"That's why he doesn't care she's dead," Alex realized, "We did him a favor."

"Much more than that," Nigel whispered.

They locked eyes, Alex feeling he's being once more pulled into Nigel's world, falling and falling like Alice in Wonderland and he's diving head first. "Like what?" he asked.

And Nigel smirked, "We handed him his Maracela."

Alex was quiet, there was that foreboding feeling again, that sense of

dread. Kathlyn was killed and burnt and Nigel did not seem done with him or any of the group just yet.

Nigel reached out for the book, his cold fingers such a stark difference to Alex's warm ones and he wondered if Nigel was truly even alive or was Alex just merely seeing a spectrum, that they all were a phantom that haunted this Manor and Alex was alone all the time.

Alex must admit since he's arrived in Scotland he's not been the same, he felt out of character, he felt completely different and he would blame it all on Nigel even though he knew the boy before him was half the reason this was happening.

Nigel opened the book, there a skull drawing depicted in there and underneath a passage. "The Skull of Sidon," Alex read, glancing up at Nigel, "You actually believe this crap?"

"It's not crap, it's real."

"How real?" Alex asked, daring him, "Have you seen it?"

"You do not need to see to believe."

Alex scoffed, shutting the book and placing it aside, "The Knights of the Templar were just men, you and I. They were wrongly accused, who's to say these legends, these stories are not simply just made up hmm? To put claim that they were heretics and to find cause to burn them."

"Maracela is just a myth..."

Nigel frowned, he got up and moved from the window to the bed, back facing Alex, "I was wrong about you."

Alex followed him, his voice on the back of Nigel's neck, running down his spine, "What were you wrong about?"

Nigel clenched his jaw, not turning, his voice barely a whisper, "Everything."

Alex swallowed, his heart hammering against his chest, he knows what's going to happen next yet he can't, *wouldn't* wrap his mind around it. Nigel was being confusing again. "Get out," he ordered.

Alex did not leave, "The Knights of the Templar had sworn of women, the tale is wrong."

Nigel turned around, eyes red with tears, he's more than angry he's filled with rage and Alex knows he's hurting him but Nigel was s trapped in his own morbid fantasies, for all Alex knows it's what got Kathlyn dead in the first place. "Get out."

"Who killed Kathlyn?"

Nigel doesn't answer.

"Was it Luke, to get Lizzy for himself finally?" Alex stepped forward, "She said she and I was meant to be engaged but his grandfather..."

Nigel scoffed, turning away, ignoring him.

"I'm not claiming I like her you know I just want to know, Nigel please. You said we handed him his Maracela, you mean Lizzy, right?"

He still doesn't answer.

"Nigel..." Alex felt like he was in the verge of tears, angry also, "Tell me what is it you know. Lizzy said you know a lot, I want to understand, I want to..."

Nigel moved to his desk, going for the pages of his sketches, "I've told you everything you need to know."

Alex stormed towards him, grabbed the papers from his hand and tosses them, "What I *need* to know?! Are you fucking kidding me?" Alex looked around them, the door was locked but he's scared someone would hear them, he leans forward hissing, "I was willing to walk with you, this path whatever it is. I was willing to be your alibi."

Nigel was silent. "God damn it!" Alex grabbed him, forced him to the wall, hand to his neck, "Fucking *talk* to me Nigel."

Nigel doesn't open his mouth, he just stares at Alex, observe the way his anger got the best of him, Alex punched the wall, it fucking hurt but it makes him drop Nigel and he slides to the floor still unmoving.

Alex looked down at him and suddenly he regreted it all, he felt sorry, sorry he had yelled, lash out and he's so confused, he knelt down before Nigel, moving and burying his face in his neck and Nigel lets him.

"Do you care for them as much as you care for me?"

Alex looked up, startled by the question, "What? What you are talking

about?"

"The rest of them, Jack?" Nigel asked, he touches Alex's face, the tear on his index finger and he stares at it then at Alex, "There will be more sacrifices, I need to know Jack. I need to know you will not lose sense of your true self."

Alex swallowed. His true self? What was his true self again. Was it Alex? Or was it Jack of Spades?

Nigel asked again, "Promise me..."

Alex blinked, nodding his head, "I - I promise."

Nigel seemed satisfied enough, he reached out and cradled Alex in his arms, kissing the top of his head. "I forgive you," he whispered.

Alex suddenly felt the turmoil in his mind at rest, whatever it was Nigel was referring to and there were so many things Alex felt sorry for he couldn't name them all. Nigel'e the words were enough to make him sigh heavily into his arms, allowing himself to lay there his nose and lips pressed against Nigel's neck.

-

They woke up earlier than sunrise the next morning. The promise of hunting still kept by everyone as they gathered their guns and blades and went out stalking into the forest with the dogs.

Alex and Luke took the lead, they were experts enough as Lionel, Elizabeth and Nigel lingered behind.

They looked and search for a good spot for a deer, stayed nearly hours near noon. Luke and Alex now alone together, lying on the grass of the Scottish hill top, the rifle resting on top of a boulder as they both

waited for the deer to come in sight.

"What was all that yelling about last night, eh?"

Alex did not think Luke wanted to chat at a time like this and frankly he was not in the mood but he indulged him knowing the type of person Luke was, never stopping till his poking starts to make the person spill their entire guts out. "Nigel and I had a fight."

Luke chuckled, "No surprise there. Your boyfriend is not very communicative."

"He's not my boyfriend."

Luke tilted his head at him, "Really? I suppose he's a girl then, hm? Your girlfriend perhaps?"

Alex rolled his eyes and Luke laughed. He went into his pocket and pulls out some beef jerky and handed it to Alex to chewed on as they waited. He yanked and pull at the meat, chewing and it was suddenly healed that burning hungry in him that he delay to put out due to the fact he was just upset at everything that's happened.

"Look at us eh," Luke said leaning his head against the rock, grinning up at Alex, "You and I both are going to be family if this carries on."

"What are you talking about?"

"Nigel and Lizzy..." Luke said, then he turns to look into the scope but no deer had shown, Alex has never moved from his position, he's ready to fire unlike Luke who's lazying around.

"What about them?"

"One would say they are both apart of an hierarchy the two of us cannot phantom to think of."

Alex snickered, shaking his head, not Luke too, "Are you referring to the Knights of the Templar?"

"So you *do* know?"

Alex nodded, fingers moving on the back of the gun, he's suddenly itching to pull the trigger, he wants to fire just to hear something other than his spiraling thoughts. "Apparently not enough."

"They do that," Luke admits, "Keeps secrets more as you go up the

ladder of this society. My grandfather if it hadn't been for Nigel and Elizabeth's grandmother, he would've been in the dark given how low of a rank he is with his blood being well tainted with an outsider."

Alex turned to him, "And what rank does Lizzy and Nigel's fathers carry in this club?"

A tug of smile played on Luke's face, he moved closer, almost whispering to Alex's ear, "The question you should be asking yourself my dear Alex Frobes is what rank is your father?"

Alex flinched, he turned to see Luke's smile was that shitty smug smirk he shows when he knows he's winning. "I suppose she's told you about your *almost* engagement? Lizzy I mean."

Alex nodded, heart racing against his chest, "What about that?"

"I suppose now she probably regrets me and her now cause of the whole what if..." Luke was staring at him, daring him to give into the bait and Alex waited because Luke as intelligent as he was he likes to hear himself talk and Alex was proven right.

"You see blood is a powerful thing, Alex. Nigel didn't just get fascinated by you simply because have a pretty face." Luke smiled, "And Elizabeth isn't intrigued now because of a simple engagement."

"And what else is it then?"

"You're inheritance will be much more than any of us when your father dies," Luke whispered. "For the Order belongs to men with a rank such as his and Nigel's father is the grandmaster of that Order second below your father whereas Elizabeth's father is just like Nigel's father in rank maybe a bit higher but not as high as your father but given Lizzy's dad is a son of a Duchess, the whole notion of who should respect who is skewered mainly just by that. Your father Ian Forbes may just be an average man lacking noblity on the outside but in the Order he holds much more power."

Alex's pulse was ringing so loud now, he felt like he's going deaf. Luke placed a hand behind his head holding him so he doesn't shudder or shake as now the deer was appoarching their peripheral. "I know I like to pretend I'm in charge of this little group we have form here but truly Alex, I'm merely just envious of your already given title. *You* are the one who's really in charge of us, of this strange family we have create, soon of the Order we will all be apart of when our fathers dies. Now..." Luke patted his back, "You wanna fire the gun or shall I?"

There's a temptation to fire it at Luke but Alex doesn't take it. Though Luke's words seemed to be laced with some form of manipulation, Alex saw truth in them, over the course of weeks traveling around Britain, Ireland, Italy, France, Spain and even the holy lands — he was finally seeing what his father had been showing him but it wasn't his father he had to thank for that. It was Nigel, it was the rest of this odd group that was form in a pact of blood by liked minded individuals.

Alex must've delayed taking the shot because the gun took off and Alex hadn't even pull the trigger, so it must've been Luke.

They ran to the injured deer, the final lethal bow needed to be struck. Luke took out a hunting dragger from his pants pocket, unsheathing it before flipping the handle to Alex. "Nigel wanted you to be the one to do it, he insisted I must add."

Alex stared at him then at the dragger, he reached out, his slender fingers wrapping around the black handle of the blade. Luke holds the deer down though the shot already immobilized the creature. Alex stared into the buck's eyes, the breathing heavy, belly raising and falling, the short red fur combed through his fingers, Alex — though he did eucharist since the moment he was given his communion at ten — still in his heart could not think of a prayer to ask God to bless the creature before him. Instead he thanked the gods, the old ones that belonged to the lands of Celtic people and plunged the dragger into the heart of the deer.

The Buck's eyes went wide, he jerked and moved as Luke held it down, whispering gently in it's ear, kissing and stroking the creature as Alex twisted the blade, waiting and waiting until the beating of the heart stop and the breathing ceased.

He pulled it out, blood on his hands and he stared at it then at the Kathlyn's body. Alex goes back, startled, Kathlyn's body was lying there in place of the deer and she's bleeding out, her chest craved wide open, her heart no one to be seen and she's staring at him horrified.

"Alex, Alex, *Alex!*"

Alex was shaking, he wouldn't let Luke touch him, the blood getting on Luke's shirt and clothes as he held Alex in place, "Hey, hey, hey, look at me. Look. At. Me."

Alex does as he's told, he's crying and Luke pulled him in, hugging him tightly, his lips on his forehead, "Shh it's okay, it's alright, what

did you see?"

How did he know?

Alex looked up at him as Luke's blue eyes studied him carefully, "Did you see Kathlyn?"

"I didn't..." Alex was gasping for air, "*I* didn't kill *her*."

Luke nodded, stroking his hair gently, petting him almost. Then he cupped his face, staring into his eyes, "But you wish you had, didn't you?"

Alex was too afraid to speak. He looks back to see it's the buck now lying there and not Kathlyn and suddenly maybe once again Luke was right and that was the scary part of it. Luke doesn't need an answer for Alex's silence was enough for him to understand.

"Come on let's go back. We're done here."

Luke got out the ropes, tying the deer up securely then the two rolled it onto the deer sled they brought with them.

They both drag it down hill together.

Elizabeth was the first to spot them, she climbed on top her horse and met them half way, unmounting and helping them connect the reins of the sled to the back of horse and helped carried it down.

Nigel and Lionel climbed up hill, Lionel looking at the deer before turning at the two to see blood on their hands, he doesn't say anything just twisted his face in disgust and Alex chuckled feeling finally at ease, "What? You don't approve?"

Lionel looked back at him, "No, frankly I do not, it was innocent."

"Everything is innocent," Luke said, "Even the chicken you eat brother, are you gonna turn vegan on us?"

Lionel sighed, "It just feels wrong?"

"What does?" Nigel asked.

"Kathlyn's missing, they're gonna wonder why we aren't more..." He shrugged his shoulders, "I don't know, *concerned*. I mean she was your girlfriend Luke, you brought her here, she wasn't meant to be here but you did and she was your responsibility."

"Are you putting this on me!?"

"No that's not –"

"That's exactly what you are doing?"

Luke walked up to him, "Are you having second thoughts Lionel, do you want to join Kathlyn?"

Lionel was taken aback, he furrowed his brows, then there's a smile on his lips, "Don't make empty threats brother, we both know you are the weakest one here."

Luke scowled at him, Elizabeth pushed her way between them, "Come on you two, enough. Let's get going home before they arrive."

"He does have a point," Alex whispered, eyeing Lionel carefully from under this gaze.

Lionel turned to him, "Fucking thank you! See Alex here is the only one with some fucking sense!"

Alex doesn't like the way they all were watching him like he was some kind of leader but he moved closer to the group, "If they ask why we were out hunting instead of searching, just say we did everything already. We thought a little bit of hunting would help calm our nerves." He looked at Luke, "Isn't that the whole reason anyways, we're not lying."

Elizabeth nodded, shrugging, "We're definitely not telling the truth either."

"It is decided then," Alex said his eyes landed on Nigel and there's a sudden gleeful praise in those blue eyes — *he's satisfied with what he's seeing.* "We'll tell them that. Now let's go."

-

Nigel and Lionel was the one who took the time to crave and skin the creature. Both ambile in the task with Nigel's morbid fascination of all things dead and Lionel's with all things alive, he's studying to be a surgeon something Alex didn't know until Elizabeth told him.

Watching the two at work was truly a strange sight, Alex found himself sitting down in the kitchen after he had a shower just simply staring at them and Lionel was the one to point it out, "Enjoying the view?"

Nigel looked up as if just realizing Alex was there. He simply shook his head, admitting, "I don't know, you two are so completely opposite of each other and yet..."

Lionel smiled, looking at Nigel, "Don't entertain his thoughts right Nigel, it'll only break your heart."

Alex raised a brow, "What's that suppose to mean?"

Elizabeth comes dashing into the kitchen yelling, "They're here! They're here!" She stops seeing the blood, the eyes of the buck staring straight at her and she shivered, shaking her head, "They're here?"

"Well we can't meet them," Lionel said, "My hands are all dirty. The kitchen's a mess."

"Then go shower."

"The meat will spoil."

"Fine," she said then turned to Alex, "Come on would you, your father will want to talk to you."

Alex was suddenly sinking, he's terrified now. So much has changed, he thought if he saw his father he'll know already what he was doing here in Scotland. Alex eyes met Nigel's, they never discussed what will happen after the summer. How long this was meant to be, and Alex was afraid now cause he didn't quite see a future with them, not with the life he had outside of this Manor, back at home, back at school, he had a reputation to hold up, this was not the reputation he was meant

to carry.

You're changing Jack, becoming someone new, admit it and there will not be anything left to fear.

Alex swallowed, Nigel was in his head again but he looked away, blinking — he doesn't know quite from what.

Alex got up and followed Elizabeth to the front door. His dogs tailing behind him.

Chapter End Notes

The stuff I'm adding here it are just some assumptions of this 'Order', we know so little, just that they are well connected people, hiding some secrets that they didn't wanted the public to know about hence the whole thing with Alex and Nigel, his dad wanted it to end as fast as possible.

That's like the only reason I felt compelled to write this fic, cause of my theories like who are these members, how powerful are they in terms of our society, Alex Forbes role as a son to Ian especially with him being apart of something like this, etc, etc...

So many unanswered questions!

Anyways thanks for reading :)

Chapter 10: 7 of spades ♠

Chapter Notes

Warning: mentions of sexual assault, incest and abuse.

It's not heavy, just mild but I'm still warning :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Elizabeth reached for the doorknob as Alex saw his father stepping out of the car through the window curtains, another man with him, tall, roguish, face harderned with distain. Immediately Alex saw the resemblance and knew this was Elizabeth's father.

The car behind three other stepped out — an older man possibly in his late sixties or early seventies, a middle aged woman and a man whom Alex already recognized as Nigel's father.

There's a third car appoarching, a man and a young boy no more than thirteen and Elizabeth goes still, "Kathlyn's father and brother. I didn't think..." She turned to Alex then swung open the door and ran down the stairs. Alex hid behind the curtains a bit, taking a deep breath in as he counted down the seconds, *five, four, three, t*wo — he followed behind her.

Elizabeth first greeted her father, he doesn't say much, he looks at her, a man with such a angry, cold gaze that reminded Alex a lot like Nigel for some reason – then he remembered they were forgotten related.

"Eliza..." He said simply as she rest a kiss on his cheek. Victor Stewart noticed Alex Frobes lingering behind and immediately turned to Ian, the boy's father, and said, "He looks an awful lot like his mother, nothing of you."

Ian added nothing to this, his shoulder was just tense, his mouth moving but not speaking. He met Alex's gaze, the two not saying anything to each other as Lizzy walked up to greet him, "Godfather, lovely to see you."

"Lizzy dear," he gave her a smile, "Or should I say your Grace, your grandmother has made it abundantly clear in the will that her title should be yours."

She gave a sheepish smile, her eyes looking at her father who clearly

was holding back his boiling rage, he turned away, going up the steps, "Is the staff here?"

"Yes," Elizabeth replied, "They came in this morning."

"Good." Victor's gaze landed on Mr. Myers and his son before looking at Elizabeth and Alex, "Be sure to tell David exactly what went down and how his daughter went *missing*." He said the word with such emphasis that it startled Alex thinking he might latch out on them. Victor went inside, taking off his hat before looking back at the other men, "Ian, John, Richard you are welcome to join me in my studies."

He left everyone there standing and Alex forwned at how unpleasantly rude he seemed. Elizabeth smiled at the rest of her guests. Richard Anderson greeted her, she placed a kiss on his cheek as he asked for Luke and Lionel. The same time Luke comes out, "I'm here grandfather."

"And Lionel?" he asked, his voice seeming to drag with annoyance.

Luke strutted lazily down the stairs, hands in his pants pockets, "They're cleaning the meat."

John frown, looking at the three of them, "Meat, what meat?"

"We went hunting today, all of us," Luke declared.

Both Helen and John shifted uneasily, their eyes glancing at David who looked completely shocked. "A crisis like this and you went hunting?" Helen replied, aghasted.

"We thought we would find her in the woods," Alex whispered. And they turned and looked at him.

Helen studied him for a brief moment, head tilted, "You must be Alex, I've heard of you." She smiled at him, holding out her hand, "It's good to finally met you."

Alex took it confused, "My father has spoken about me?"

Mrs. Colbie was confused, "No dear." She turned to look at John who simply gave carried a stiff scowl on his face. "Only Nigel spoken of you on the telephone once or twice, he says the two of you have become good friends"

Alex nodded and Helen smiled at him, reaching out and touching his

cheek, "It is nice, Nigel has a friend. Right John?"

John simply hums, going up the steps following Richard and his grandson inside.

Helen sighed, turning to Mr. Myers, "I'm so sorry."

Mr. Myers was still quiet, he stared hard at the two teenagers. "Sorry, my daughter is missing and you have the audacity to just linger about. You haven't even phone the police."

"We thought it best not to yet," Elizabeth replied.

"Best? How is it *not* the best?"

"Because she left with all her clothes and Luke's money," Alex replied, the lie having been rehearsed for so long it felt so natural and true escaping his tongue, "We were all sleeping, none of us knew till the evening."

"And why's that?"

"Because I make it a duty to have us all to eat every night together," Elizabeth replied, her chin raising, "No matter how angry we are at each other we eat together to know if we are safe and alright. Kathlyn didn't come, Luke went and check on her and she was gone."

David heard Luke's name and scoffed, "That boy, he must've had something to do with this."

And he goes storming up the stairs with his son locking gaze with Elizabeth who reached out to hold him but he's moving so she doesn't touch him, following his father.

Both Alex and Elizabeth exchange quiet looks both nervous about what's to come and even though it was clear there wasn't any more 'proof' left of murder — they all made sure the house was clean the night before the maids arrived this morning — there's no denying this will always be over their heads now. Mr. David Myers will never see the return of his daughter, never.

Helen sighed again once they were alone. "This is so terrible, you children." She looked at the two of them, "I knew it was a bad idea to left you all here in this house. I told John it was terrible for Nigel but he's fine, he *is* fine right?"

"Yes of course," Elizabeth whispered.

Nigel came out same time, "Mother." Helen immediately ran up, holding him checking his body and kissing his face, "Nigel, oh dear, why are your hands all red? What were you doing?"

"It belongs to a buck we killed it's fine," he replied smiling at her.

"Fine...?" She studied him carefully, eyebrows furrowed as she grabbed his chin, "You look tanner somehow."

Alex and Elizabeth smiled. "That's because we've been trying to get him to be in the sun as much as we can, ma'am," Alex spoke up.

"See," Nigel said, pulling her hand away, "Alex's a good friend."

Helen was silent, she slowly nodded her head and placed another kiss on Nigel's forehead, combing his hair from the mess she had created, "That's good, love. That's very good, I'm going to go inside okay, please cooperate with Mr. Myers and the detective."

Everyone frowned. "Detective?" Lizzy asked, "What detective?"

"He's apart of the Order, he's going to question you children so be sure to answer honestly, hopefully the town's police picks up on something for us to have a lead on but for now this is the Order's problem, until there's evidence it isn't we keep quiet, we don't want to attract media's attention, okay? Especially with your grandmother's death Eliza, the Queen will be having her eyes on you too."

"So politics are involved," Alex whispered, he was not surprised, he suspected as much and to be honest he's sort of thankful for it.

Helen scoffed, "For people like us, it's always politics in everything we do." She lightly took her son's hand and squeezed it before turning away and going into the Manor.

Nigel watched as the door shuts and turned to Lizzy, reaching for her hand and taking them resting a kiss on her knuckles. She's shaking, there's fear but Alex doesn't know from what because he thinks Nigel killed Kathlyn but he's suddenly suspecting it to be Lizzy.

"It will be fine," he reassured her.

She took a deep breath, holding his face and smiling at them. Then she turned to Alex, "Were you ever good in theatre arts?"

Alex scoffed, "I'm always behind working on the plays, never one to do any sort of acting, why?"

She smiled tightly, "Cause the stage is set, Alex. We'll be performing till the day we die." And she walked away, leaving Alex quietly standing there in his thoughts.

Nigel and him locked gaze. Apart of Alex wanted to reach out to hold him but he's now cautious because his worlds are colliding now, this between them — whether Alex liked it or not — will soon come to an end and he wondered who will retreat before they depart.

He thinks back to Lizzy's words. Must it really be till they die? Surely only until they were in the privacy of each other's company, until this goes cold and no one bothers them any more.

But for now they weren't in each other's company, they were mostly separated now that the adults stepped back into the pictures.

The detective came in less than a hour. A man possibly mid thirties that goes by the name Martin McKenzie.

He treated all of them as they were suspects of a crime of homicide and not a missing report case — he was right to do that of course but it was rather annoying to each of them for different reasons entirely.

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Nigel seemed at first the likely suspect for Martin McKenzie, he's the odd one, the freak, the one who has a bunch of dead wild animals gutted opened and stuffed up as decorations in his room and studies along bottles of preserve organs and records and drawings of both animals and human anatomy. He fit the profile of a killer, the perfect candidate until Nigel had spoken to him — he was the first to volunteer to talk to him — whatever he had said was convincing

enough that detective no longer saw him responsible for Kathlyn's 'disapperance'.

It made everyone else quite uncomfortable.

Lionel was next, he came out a bit shaken, Alex saw his legs were moving constantly and his hand twitching, he looked like he was going through withdrawals how much he was sweating and soon he excused himself from the living room to go for a smoke outside which had his grandfather joining him, scolding at him, they fight though Alex couldn't really make out what they were saying, all he knew was Richard grumbling as he came back inside.

Luke was next, he went in smug, came out a bit dazed and distorted and angry but it seemed he was in the clear. At least that was the image he was portraying for the group to think. He soon joined his brother for a smoke until McKenzie separated them from each other much to Luke's annoyance.

Elizabeth went in nervous and came out crying. She rushed into Nigel's arms who held her as he glared at the detective who looked like he was in much pain, almost regretful questioning her. Victor Stewart saw the sight of his daughter and started arguing with Martin about his method of questioning. Ian joined them and soon all the adults were whispering and hissing at each other as David Myers looked like he was about to throw a rage. He snapped, "My daughter is missing for fuck sakes, we should be looking for her, right this moment!"

"And we will but first I must talk to everyone," Martin replied, "Alex your next."

All the adults turned to him now, his father's features upturned, always disappointed, always angry and bitter. Alex swallowed hard, clenching his jaw and going into the study where McKenzie had the door opened for him.

"We'll discuss everything after I'm done," he said to everyone. "Victor, I did not meant to make your daughter cry but if she said was true then..." He's looking at the girl then at him, "I feel sorry for her that you're even her dad."

"Why you fucking –"

Martin slammed the door on him. The yelling kept on happening behind the wooden frame and it's distorted, slowly fading away the

more the detective joined Alex at the desk.

"Well sorry about that." He cleared his throat awkwardly taking a seat.

Alex nervously spoke up, "Why was Lizzy crying?"

Martin stared at him for a brief moment before averting his eyes to his notebook and pen, "I can't tell you, not until I'm truly done talking with all five of you."

"You think she was killed? Kathlyn I mean?"

The detective tilted his head, "You think that?"

Alex frowned, "You're treating us as suspects to a homicide."

"Yes I am..."

"Why?"

"Well..." Martin gave a little smile before it becomes a frown, he looked at Alex as he leaned back into the seat, "Six teenagers with absolute no supervision whatsoever in a Manor this large on an estate a size of a small town, anyone with enough sense will most certainly think this is homicide. You called your parents not the police. You were scared. Hoping they would help."

"We didn't wanted to draw any attention in case she shows up."

Martin nodded, "All of you are highly intelligent individuals each with fascinating reasons to hate Kathlyn Myers, tell me what exactly happen two days ago. Tell me your tale of what went down at the beach then to when you get back to the Manor and the night till morning."

Alex nodded and he tells his side of the story. He starts earlier than the day they all went beach together, he goes further back to when he showed up at the Manor, tells McKenzie his first reaction to each of them he meet. Luke — he never liked but admired enough for his confidence, smug intelligent and blunt nature. Lionel — he thought of as a friend, someone who he deemed as strong to lean on and Alex even hints at his attraction to him though he wondered if the detective got a hold of that.

He spoke of Nigel though he kept it as brief as possible, told him of the two already knowing each other through their fathers though they

never met, and Alex spending time at his country house before coming here. "I was tasked to be Nigel's friend at first I didn't wanted to but then... well then I saw I actually quite rather found him interesting and I enjoyed his company."

Lizzy was next and he mentioned his first impression of her, always angry, always trying to appear strong, her engagement to Luke which didn't surprise Martin so he must've heard it from either of those two, he mentioned the strange complex relationship between Kathlyn, Luke and Elizabeth, though the two girls seems at odds with each other, they did get along at times. "Kathlyn only started being an annoyance when she suspected something was happening between Lizzy and I?"

"And was there?"

Alex shook his head, he swallowed, "I did kiss her but it was on accident, I was... I panicked okay."

Martin was silently writing down everything he heard, "Alright go on."

Alex soon then mentioned what happened at the beach, how Luke had him underwater strangling him for the accidental kiss cause he stolen Elizabeth's first kiss, how Kathlyn soon was at everyone's throat, yelling foul things and Martin again did not seemed surprised by it.

Soon Alex moved on to what happened at the Manor, what him and Lionel was doing, the mushrooms they took along with the whiskey and weed and the high he felt.

Then Alex goes still, he's uncomfortable and Martin notices and allowed him to take his time. He talked about what Kathlyn did, how unable he was to stop her and that he didn't know how Nigel knew but he came to his aid. "She left after Nigel stayed."

Martin stared at him, for the first time he's actually listening, eyebrow raised, he then swallowed, "I see..." He went on writing what Alex told him before asking, "And what did you and Nigel do after she left? How long did he stayed for?"

Alex fell silent, he doesn't want to say he didn't remember because it will make him more of a suspect but he also wonder what had Nigel spoke to the detective, if their alibis will match and he really should've admitted the truth to Nigel but he was still beating himself over the shame he felt with everything that has transpire. "Promise you wouldn't tell my father."

Detective McKenzie stopped writing, he looked up at him, carefully, "What do you want me not to say?"

Alex wanted to tear up, he was clenching his jaw and his fist, "I um... I lied to Nigel, I told him I didn't remember about what happened afterwards cause I was scared."

The detective closed his book, leans forward, "It's okay Alex you can talk to me. I wouldn't judge you."

Alex swallowed, blinking back the tears, "Nigel kissed me after Kathlyn left and..." He's tearing up, looking on the floor, he started crying, "We had sex, it was... it was my first time."

Martin was slowly nodding, he goes and open his book, writing down the statement, "Was it consensual?"

"What?"

Martin shrugged, "Well you claimed you were high on a lot of things you had with Lionel, then Kathlyn you claimed tried to seduce you and you said no, then you said Nigel kissed you before... I just want to know was it consensual or were you manipulated into doing it?"

Alex felt his heart hammering against his chest, he's terrified. He's suddenly feeling his throat locking, his lips dry so he licked it, stuttering as he spoke, "Uh... It was – it was consensual."

Martin nodded, writing it down, "So why lie Alex?"

Alex shook his head, "I don't know?"

"Were you ashamed?"

"I guess I was, I guess..." He stared at his hands, "I'm not like this in school, I have a reputation, I don't be soft, I don't like boys. I don't..."

McKenzie nodded, "So you like this Nigel then?"

"I don't know... I – yes but what are we gonna do, it's sinful isn't it? We can't be together cause it's wrong and I know that and I'm sure Nigel knows that and I'm —" Alex blinked, "I would much rather if I forget it all entirely though apart of me wish I didn't had to."

Detective McKenzie stared at him, he takes in a deep breath the opened.up his book and flip some of the pages, "Did Nigel stay with you the entire night?"

"Ugh yes," Alex said, "We were in each other's arms till probably until he left in the morning I slept till around noon, woken up to see everyone else up, Nigel in his studies until I knocked on the door and we both went down for tea with Luke, Elizabeth and Lionel."

Martin was quiet, he went on flipping the pages of his notebook, "Nigel claimed the same thing, he says he spent the entire night with you, slept with you till the morning where he got up and stayed in his studies and he said he saw Luke went for a jog sometime between nine and ten while everyone else woke up around noon where you all spent the time in the livingroom waiting on Kathlyn to come join you."

Alex nodded, "Yes there you have it then that's what happened."

The detective shuts the book, looking at him, "Nigel claimed you were lying about not remembering, I wouldn't tell you his version of what happened but the two of you should talk, sort that out yourself." He cleared his throat awkwardly, "You seem to have grown really close. It's the twenty first century kid, these things are normalize I suppose."

Alex scoffed, "Tell that to people like my father and the rest of the teachers at my school."

Martin looked he was in pain, like he was questioning why he agreed to do this for the Order and Alex held back his chuckle. The detective soon closed his book, "Just so you know I wouldn't tell your father what happened, you have my word on that."

"Thank you sir."

Alex got up until he's halfway and halted, "Can I go now?"

The detective nodded, "Yeah sure you can."

Alex held out his hand and the detective shook it smiling at him. Soon he was outside, heading to where everyone was in the living room waiting and he felt a sudden weight lifted off his shoulders. He knows he's not a suspect and Nigel was his alibi which was great in itself.

His father and him locked gaze but he doesn't approach Alex who sits down next to Nigel and his mother

"How was it?" Nigel asked softly.

"Good I think. You?"

Nigel smirked, looking up at him almost coquettishly, "Yes quite good."

His mother rest his hand on Nigel, "No talking you boys, the detective said so."

They both stayed quiet as Detective McKenzie came and join them, he goes up to Victor, thanking him for using his studies, then he's talking to Mr. Myers and Alex's father join in the conversation and soon Nigel's father.

Mr. Anderson — Luke and Lionel's grandfather is the only one who sat down besides his grandson smoking a cigar eyeing each of them all carefully, "So?" he said, drawing the attention of everyone, "Should I be calling my lawyer, David?"

David frowned but McKenzie is the one who answered, "Lionel is the only one who didn't have a proper alibi and was well... he was doing psychedelic shrooms along with Alex Forbes until he left Lionel alone."

Ian shot Alex a quiet rageful look and Alex just rolled his eyes, leaning back into his seat, arms crossed.

Lionel scoffed, "So what you think I did something to Kathlyn when I was high?"

"No one is accusing you of that," McKenzie said.

"It sure does sound like it though," Richard claimed, then turned to Lionel and slapped him across the head hard, "How many times have I told you to stop with the drugs, you're a man now, I've long accepted the fault in you, not wanting to be my heir but a doctor instead, then your desires for men, what more do you want, what more do you claim you're suffering from huh?"

Lionel held his head down, his hair covering his face as his hands were tensing up but he doesn't clenched them, Alex saw he's trying his best to control whatever emotions he was feeling and Alex felt them all with him, he glared up at Richard, the old man looked at him and scoffed before turning to Ian who noticed the way Alex was, "Boy! Control yourself."

Alex didn't want to, he was downright pissed, Lizzy lightly shook her head fear in her eyes and Luke gave him an encouraging smile, daring him to go on but it was Nigel who held him by the shoulder, leaning in and whispering in his ear, "This is not your battle."

Alex looked up at him, the two sharing a moment before Alex slowly nodded and straightened himself, he's not longer angry now, the rage was gone with nothing but amusement, "None of us hurt Kathy, she's probably off somewhere fucking some cabbie as she drives away from this wretched place."

David Myers turned rage with rage, "What did you just say!?"

He's pointing at yelling at Alex who tilted his head at him, smirking at him, the corner of his eyes Luke was hiding his laughter as the adults all around them go wild and chaotic, yelling and fighting. Even Lizzy tried her best to suppress her laughter, Nigel grinning too, only Lionel was still expressionless.

McKenzie turns to David Myers, pushing him to the wall, calming him down, "Are you aware your daughter was black mailing Luke Anderson to be with her?"

David goes still, he's angry but it's clear he's hiding something even as he grumbled out, "No. I wasn't aware."

"Bullshit!" Luke yelled.

"Watch how you're speaking to me boy!"

Richard slapped Luke at the back of his head, "There you happy, David."

No one said anything, David still with a scowl as the detective went on. "Your son Michael is alive, Mr. Anderson, fake his death, left his wife and children and remarried. Are you aware of that?"

Richard turned to Luke, "Yes."

Lionel looked up at his brother, "You knew?!"

"To protect you and Lisa," Luke replied, "I could handled the truth but I knew you couldn't, she threatened to always tell you when I brought up breaking up with her. It was... inconvenient."

McKenzie smiled, "So I suppose it was convenient she's gone."

"No," Luke replied, "I hated her but she was decent company."

"And my daughter isn't?" Victor claimed.

Luke smiled, "I never said that Mr. Stewart, your daughter is a Queen

amongst knights and princes. We serve her."

It was true enough but it made all everyone's gaze directed straight at Lizzy and she shifted uncomfortably before Nigel nudged her at the elbow and she tightened her jaw and raised her chin looking at the detective.

Martin nodded his head and sighs, "I'll see what the local authorities say if they've seen a girl matching Kathlyn's description. For now David, we wait."

"But one of them —"

"None of them knows *anything*," Martin replied, then pressed the bridge of his nose, "And frankly none of them rather like her in the first place. Why was she even here? You've told me Victor she wasn't suppose to be here."

"No," Richard clarified, "She wasn't but my grandson insisted." He turned to Luke who simply shrugged, "A month in this purgatory you can't expect me to not bring some form of entertainment."

"My daughter *is not* some entertainment."

"And yet you allowed her to come, knowing quite well why she was coming."

Luke stared down the man and Alex was certain Luke was gonna be the first to falter but no instead it was David Myers looking away and grumbling to himself, all aware what he had done so he can have a foot in the Order.

The adults did some more talking and soon they allowed the teenagers time together. Lionel lit himself a cigarette in the kitchen and surprisely Elizabeth grabbed it from his mouth and took it between her lips, "Gimme that."

Luke stared at her with a raised brow and she shrugged, "What? I'm on edge?"

"Why were you crying?" Alex asked. He had hoped to get her alone but he knew now it would be challenging and down right impossible given their parents were back so he's crossing fingers see answered him in front of everyone.

Elizabeth exhaled out the smoke, tapping gently in the sink, "Kathlyn

came out and threatened to go to the media about who my mother was."

"And who was your mother?"

"Alex," Luke whispered, "Now's not —"

"It's alright Luke," Elizabeth reassured,"You all have some sort of idea I'm a bastard well let me be clear I'm heir to my grandmother's inheritance whether anyone likes it or not, I'm her daughter's child as well as her son's."

Alex flinched, his eyes opened wide completely shocked, "What?" He looked around him, "You all knew?"

Nigel clenched his jaw, "Only this summer."

"I knew the moment I was engaged to Lizzy," Luke admitted.

Lionel sighed, relighting a new cigarette for himself, "I'm with you Alex I was in the dark though I heard the rumors you were Victora's daughter and Ian Frobes was the father."

Alex scoffed, chuckling, "That's ridiculous my father loved my mother."

"It's the same rumor my father went with to cover up the truth of it," Elizabeth replied looking at Alex, "And your father knew all about it."

"So what? He raped your mother, *his sister*, is that what you're saying or was it all some sick consensual thing?"

Elizabeth tensed up, blinking back her tears, "I was told he raped her the moment she tried to run away with your father, Alex. It was... my father was possessive of all things his. My mother was his twin, she belonged to him."

"That's fucking sick."

Luke scoffed, leaning back into against the wall, "Well that's fucking narcissist sociopaths Alex, they get sick and twisted to have their way."

Alex now was suddenly craving a cigarette of his own and as if reading his thoughts, Lionel fished out one for him but Alex doesn't take it. Nigel's words about having his senses clear still bothered him so he's avoiding everything, including coffee. "So my father knew

everything and yet he's still friends with him."

"A lot of people tolerate rape," Luke whispered, "Some even blame the victim."

"It doesn't matter," Elizabeth said looking shaken by the whole discussion. Nigel reached out and she allowed him to hold her hand, "My mother never filed charges it's all been covered up by the Order too. And she's dead now, so it doesn't matter."

"How did she die?"

Elizabeth's eyes were a ring of red, she's trying her best to hold it together, she takes the cigarette in her mouth and then exhaled lightly, "Don't ask stupid questions, Alex."

He looked at the rest of them and they're all quiet. It's amazing what the Order was willing to cover up and he wondered now was this how Nigel knew he could easily get away with Kathlyn's murder, he knew the Order would do anything to have it become a secret, to protect their legacy, their children. Alex knew for sure his father would do anything to protect his reputation, if that meant covering up this for his son then he would.

Ian Forbes always claimed Alex had a higher calling, an intelligence like no other and a role to play as his heir to take on the seat of this club once he's gone. It was annoying hearing those things constantly growing up but now Alex saw it, saw what his father was willing to do for him, to protect his own legacy he would cover up Alex's misdeeds, however many they might be.

Alex looked at Nigel and it seemed Nigel was reading his thoughts again as there was a shadow of a smile on his lips.

We have a joint destiny, Jack, a shared path for eternity, you and I together. I see it, our fathers sees it too, we are meant for great things.

Alex doesn't know how to feel with such a declaration. One might think it was close to a proclamation of love and a proposal even but Alex knew Nigel's twisted words were nothing like that. Nigel didn't share his same feelings, for all Alex knew he never had any to begin with.

So why sleep with me? To manipulate me further, to have me be some soldier in your holy war? Why sleep with me Nigel if you do not have feeling for me?

Nigel goes still, he heard it all and looked away and suddenly Alex was angry again but he doesn't know at whom or why.

He pushed himself up from the group who all was having their own separate conversation now aside from Nigel and Alex's wired thoughts.

When he left he heard behind him Luke asking Nigel, "Trouble in paradise?"

Nigel doesn't say anything or at least that's what Alex thinks as he goes outside for some fresh air at the patio.

He takes a few breaths, breathing in and out.

"Hello..."

Alex jumped to see someone standing there, he frowned at the boy, he was Kathlyn's little brother and there was no doubt the resemblance, it was looking at a male version of her.

"Uh hi," Alex said not sure what to say.

The door slid open and Lionel appeared, hands in pocket, "Zack you're back here come join us."

"No thanks," the boy said, he shifted his shoulders uncomfortablely, "Father said I shouldn't."

Lionel nodded, "Well Lizzy wants to talk to you, you'll refuse her?"

Zack blushe, looking down at his feet, "I suppose I can't." He gave a weak smile and waved at Alex, "It's nice meeting you."

Alex simply nodded, not finding the words to speak really. He watched the boy pass Lionel who lightly patted him on the shoulder and allowed him to go inside.

Lionel and Alex now remained outside, it was getting late. They both stood there standing over the pool watching each other's reflections, hands in pockets.

"I barely remember anything from that night," Alex admitted looking across at Lionel.

Lionel sighed, "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have — I shouldn't have force you."

Alex shook his head, "You didn't know Lionel. None of us knew."

Lionel jaw tightened, he looked back at the pool, "I feel like to drown myself in there."

Alex stared at him, completely shocked for words and Lionel grinned at him, "I'm fucked up, this, this is going to be fine for all of you, trust me. I don't remember anything, I'll try and once I do maybe we'll have all the answers."

Alex swallowed, he's looking at Lionel trying to see if he could be the one that could kill Kathlyn. No he couldn't, this was Lionel, he feels too much. Nigel would know, Nigel would tell Alex who it was if he just stop fucking with him mind and heart.

The door opened and shut and startled both boys, they turned to see Nigel walking away and Alex's heart sank further than he could ever imagine.

Looks like he had his answer, it was Nigel who was retreating away much to Alex's own surprise.

Chapter End Notes

> Downright difficult chapter to write, I rewrite it like three times and it's simply the fact that they were far too many people in one scene (and imagine I wanted to add more characters to this fic oof good thing I didn't).
>
> We finally got another character from the movie, detective Martin McKenzie, he'll be showing up some more later down the line
>
> Anyways thank you for reading :)

Chapter 11: 5 of diamonds ♦

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

With Kathlyn's missing report case underway, the parents all sent their children back home.

Alex now was back in city preparing to start school. He's studying but it's hard to focus when all he can think of is Nigel, the rest of the group and the wedged between them with the distance and radio silence by everyone. It's challenging, he was hating every moment of this isolation.

His father couldn't stay, far too busy with running the school. He'll see Alex soon enough but they will never be father and son not when he's seeing over five hundred school boys.

Alex took the time to call Josh, to see what he's been up too. Hearing his familiar voice grounds him to reality, the days in Scotland feels like a fever dream now that he's hallucinated and Nigel seemed more like a ghost he's conjured up out of strange fascination.

Josh doesn't say much though it was clear he had a wonderful vacation, he even at some point joined Raj in Sydney and they two went cliff diving which sounded far better than being housed in the middle of nowhere with a bunch of teens who were always at each other throats fighting. He doesn't say much about Scotland when he was asked, he replied as vague as possible, told him more of the scenery than of the group, kept Nigel hidden all to himself like a precious, forbidden gem.

Josh mentions that he met a girl during his trip with Raj, that the two were competing but she picked Josh instead and he was telling him what they did and Alex laughed, kicking up his feet as Josh goes describing everything in vivid detail.

"She's not very pretty but she's quite good at sucking off."

Alex snickered, "Well at least one of us can say we got laid this summer."

"What? No pretty girls in the great big Caledonia?"

Alex chuckled, eyes looking out the window as he stood there with the house phone, "Yes but she's engaged."

"You're kidding."

"Nope."

"Was she royal? Some of those royal folks do tend to be engaged so young?"

Alex nodded, "She sort of was. I think — I don't know — I think her grandmother was a duchess, she's dead now that's why my father and his club members were so busy this sumeme they were reading her will, I think."

"A will for so long? Wow must have been one hell of will with a lot of things to be declared and shared."

Alex nodded, "Yeah that's what she said."

"She? Oh you mean the Ms. Royal, you let that slitter out your hands Alex, I'm disappointed."

Alex sighed, he braced his head against the window, watching the outside traffic, "Yes well..." He clenched his jaw, feeling lonelier than ever before, "Join the line."

-

Every afternoon Alex tried to call Nigel's home in Wales, at first the staff picked it up but the moment he mentions his name they end the

call and he's back at it again this time he lies but they noted his voice, he changes that and soon there was no one at the line. It's dead even before it rings.

Alex braces his head against the receiver of the phone, banging his head lightly at it, he wants to rip the fucking thing out of the wall and toss it at how pissed he was but he tried to be calm.

He took a deep breathe and called Lizzy's home in Scotland. She doesn't answer, there's one phone in that entire Manor, it was hopeless even before he even tried.

So for the first time in days he finally phones Lthe Anderson home and a woman answers, "Hello?"

"Hi, is Luke home or maybe Lionel?"

"Yes who is this?"

"Um... I'm a friend... from school."

"A friend, well then who do you want to talk to?"

"Lionel, he um... It's important."

"Is that you Jon?"

"Er? Yes?"

The woman sighed, "Then why didn't you say so. Honestly I can't handle the two of you, please promise me if you talk to him it's not going to sour his mood, he's already been down recently."

"That's why I'm calling, I wanted to check up on him." Jesus, it's beginning to get so easy to lie now since Kathlyn's death, Alex was sort of amazed at himself.

"Well alright, I wouldn't tell him it's you okay, in case he regect your call."

"Thank you ma'am." He looked up at the ceiling and thank God too cause this was such a perfect opportunity.

She chuckled, "Ma'am, Jon please you're basically family now with your sister and my Luke together." Oh God what has Alex dragged himself into the middle of, he had no time to come out of it, he suddenly worrying she might ask him about himself but then he hears

Lionel's mother calling for him. He comes in quickly asking who it was but she's insisting he takes it without question and he does — *thank the father!*

Alex was so fucking ecstatic, he jumped out of his chair and starts moving, "Lionel it's me, Alex. So sorry, your mum thinks I'm Jon, that's Lizzy's brother, ain't? Forget that. I need to know something, Nigel — he's not picking up my calls nor is Lizzy, what's happening? Are you and Luke okay?"

Lionel was silent for a moment, Alex could hear him talking to his mother, "Mum, can you just give me a moment?"

"Honey, don't fight with him again, you two can sort it out."

"Mum, privacy, please! I can't talk to him with you buzzing around." Then he added quickly, "I love you!"

There's dead silence on the line and finally Lionel's back on the call and Alex feels his pulse quickening. "Fucking hell Alex you're one stubborn individual."

Alex crack a wide grin, "Thanks."

Lionel laughed, "Elizabeth's father has her with him till the summer is over. I think she's in Texas, I'm not entirely sure, that's where Alex lives."

Hearing his name but for a girl felt so odd, "Her sister right?"

"Yeah," Lionel said chuckling, "Alexandria? And Jon is short for Jonathan. He's... He's sort of my ex."

"I get that much."

There's dead silence again, Alex cleared his throat, "You have any idea why Nigel isn't answering my calls?"

"Fuck no, Nigel seems to be ignoring all of us. Luke's tried phoning him in Wales but nothing and then the house phone in York too —"

"Wait? He's in York?"

"Well yeah he's prepping to start school soon."

Alex nodded, "Okay, okay, do you have the number or address I just want to make sure –"

"Yeah of course, I can give you both if you want."

"Yeah do that, let me just get a pen." Alex goes scrambling for a pen and paper, using one of his novels recommended for school, '*Frankenstein*', and beings writing everything down as Lionel recites it.

"Fucking hell, Lionel, you're an angel."

Lionel chuckled, "Don't make me blush, Alex."

"Alright I'm going –!"

"Before you do just be careful okay, you should know Mr. Colbie is not a man to be trifle with, he's got a temper and you know Nigel's already... plus his mother too is very protective of him in her ways. Maybe it's for the best you know, him not answering our calls for all you know he's protecting us or something."

Alex had thought of all those things but Lionel had already highlighted, he was one stubborn individual and he needed to hear Nigel's voice, just hear it and he can know he's already and maybe the dreams of him being gone can stop.

"Yeah I get it, thanks."

"Alright... you take care of yourself."

"Yeah see ya –"

The line went dead and Alex rested the phone on the dial and stared at the number. *If he doesn't answer I'm going to fucking break into his home and demand an answer.*

Alex dialed the number, he braces himself for no answer, it's ringing and ringing and it felt like an eternity until a woman's voice was on the line, "Hello?"

Alex straightened, his heart beating in his chest, "Hi, Mrs. Colbie is Nigel home?"

"Who's this?"

"It's Alex. I just want to talk to him, know if he's alright, please can I? You can stay on the line and —"

"Stay the hell away from my son."

The call goes dead and Alex's completely frozen.

He finally loses it, he broke or more accurately he slammed the headset piece of the phone against the wall, screaming before yanking the whole fucking thing and tossing it aside.

It crashes and broke and now he regretting it and screams throwing a punch against the wall watching it break through the wood and it fucking hurts but he's sort of relief seeing the blood.

He fell to the ground, the pain making his entire body numb and he stayed like that for nearly the entire half day, he doesn't eat, he's still bleeding out and as it got darker and darker he decided he'll get up and just go.

-

Alex catches train, his hand still shaking from the pain as he held the address but the blood's all dried up now and it's not so bad.

He avoids eye contact as much as possible, paranoia getting to him thinking his father will find out where he's heading before he even gets there.

The place was easy to find though there was that foreboding feeling against the nape of Alex's neck as he walked down the quiet street of the neighborhood. He tried to ignore it as he went to peep in the windows of the Colbie's town home.

There's no sign of anyone being home though the lights were on but Alex wasn't sure if anyone was in there inside.

He tried to go around, see if there was any sign to Nigel's room, he comes by a small iron gate, hands touching it and it creak with a noise and Alex jumped when suddenly he saw Nigel appearing from below

the stairs of the basement. They locked eyes and Nigel seemed completely stunned to see him.

"How did you...?"

Alex ran down the stairs and grabbed him by the shoulders, checking around him, "Fucking hell Nigel, I've been trying to call you, you're a hard guy to reach hold of you know that." Alex laughed a bit relief but Nigel just stared at him, still confused, a bit dazed and he pulled himself away.

"Why are you here?"

Alex was taken aback, "I wanted to see how you were."

"You should leave, she thinks I'm in my room, I need to go back –" Nigel moved passed him.

But Alex blocked him with his arm, "Now hold on, I just got here..." *And you want me to leave?*

Nigel stared at him then looked down at his hand, he suddenly noticed the blood on Alex's knuckles, the blue and purple bruises and he frowned, "What happened to your hand?"

Alex pulled away, shoving it in his jacket, "Nothing."

Nigel just stood there, his gaze hard and Alex broke immediately, looking around as if worried they could be heard, he moved closer to Nigel, whispering, "I called okay and your mum picked up and she told me to stay away from you."

"So you got angry?"

Alex nervously shook his leg, looking anywhere but Nigel, "I punched the wall, I was pissed, why would she *say* that? Did you tell her to say that?"

Nigel seemed taken aback, "I wasn't aware you would care to call."

"Well we all do," Alex snapped, "Lionel said you've been ignoring everyone."

"You're talking to Lionel."

It wasn't a question, which made Alex blinked and backed away a few, "Something wrong that I am?"

Nigel frowned, "No." And he's trying to leave again and Alex grabbed him, "Nigel, wait —"

Nigel fought Alex off, pushed him and he stumbled and nearly falls, looking up completely shocked at Nigel, "Leave."

And he ran up the stairs, same time his mother can be heard calling for him and Alex just stood there for a few seconds completely confused. He was somehow still determined and sneaks around the house and he saw a bedroom, Nigel was there but it wasn't his own, his mother was there too, creaming her neck by her dressing table. Nigel appeared by the door, "You call for me?"

His gaze flicker by the window and Alex shoved his head down trying not to be seen. His mother turned, "Yes I was wondering if you're okay, I know Lizzy stopped by and you got upset I was waiting till you were feeling better –"

"I'm fine."

She titled her head, "Nigel..."

"Did anyone call the house for me today?"

She seemed taken aback by that. Helen turned to face the mirror, shaking her head, "No dear, no one called."

Fucking lair! Alex wanted to shout, he stayed quiet and Nigel knew she's lying too but if he's angry he doesn't show it.

"Lizzy brought a friend."

Helen turned and tilted his head, "A what, sweetheart?"

Nigel shrugged, moving to the dressing table to help her cream her skin, his finger dipping into the small round container, before lightly dapping it against her shoulders and he started massaging, "Lizzy brought Cleo."

"The cat? I didn't see a cat with her, just a —" And she stopped looking at her son in the mirror, his focus on massaging her neck and her lips form a flat line, "Nigel how many times have I — if your father..." She sighed, "What are you going to do with the cat? Why did Lizzy even *think* to bring such a thing to you, I need to have a word with her."

Nigel frowned, "You'll make her stop coming here?"

"If she keeps on doing this, yes!"

Nigel hands fall and Helen turned to look at him, she was seeing the anger in him and Alex thought he might snap at her or they might argue some more but Helen reached out and hold his hand, "Choose now Lizzy or the cat?"

"But I'm doing it for her, she wants it because it got poisoned and she told me I could bring it back —"

"Lizzy or the cat, Nigel."

Nigel lowered his head, he looked sad, shakened as if he wanted to cry but didn't dare to in front of her, "Cleo, I'm choosing Cleo."

Helen stared at him for a moment then she let go of his hand turning away to look at the mirror, "Good, I'll tell Lizzy you said you don't want to see her again."

Nigel eyes flickered to look at her, there's pain there but he doesn't say anything. He doesn't move until his mum looked at him through the mirror, "You can go love." He turned to move and she's calling back at him, "Oh and make sure your father doesn't see it, you know how he gets."

Nigel nodded and she smiled at him, holding out back her hand, "Come here."

He reluctantly goes in and hugs her and she kisses him on the cheek and stroked his hair, "My sweet boy, you know I love you."

Nigel doesn't say anything, his eyes flickered to the window once more and Alex nearly forgot he was standing there until he was spotted again and moved.

Nigel pulled away, "I love you too mother, I'll be in my room."

"Right of course..." She caressed his cheek just a bit before turning away and going back to creaming her skin.

Nigel left the room, Alex stood there suddenly unsure where he should go and what to do but Nigel is reappearing outside, he grabbed a hold of Alex by the arm and pulled him to the entrance of the basement. Alex was wondering why Nigel was taking him there, if there was a secret entrance to the house or something.

That is until Nigel opened the door and turning to Alex, he's suddenly a bit shy, avoiding Alex's gaze, "I've never brought anyone here."

Alex froze, staring at him, the implications. Nigel eyes are hard, he looked completely serious, down right threatening, "You are the first you hear, *the first*."

Alex swallowed, his heart racing as Nigel disappeared and Alex followed behind him, they walked quietly in the basement, not much to see, everything was old and cast aside – furniture, old kitchen machines, dishes and pieces of metal pipes and wood all rested inside in a disordered manner. Alex nearly toppled on something, there's no sight of rats thank god for that and Nigel moved passed all of those junk going further and deeper underneath the house and Alex reluctantly follows.

Nigel removed a old, worn down mattress, revealing a tiny space to which they crawled through, the area partially clean, no signs of cobwebs or dust which meant it's visited often. Alex saw Nigel sliding the small ply sheet aside revealing a secret space filled sleeves of books, some of Nigel's equipments he use for his taxidermy and Alex sees him sitting by a desk, rubbling through the shelves looking for something.

It wasn't until he brought out what it was — rubbing alcohol, cotton and bandages that Alex realized what he's doing and when Nigel grabbed his hand the gesture made Alex pull away.

He's suddenly shy too and Nigel smiled at him, "Let me see..."

Alex moved the hand closer and allowed Nigel to slowly work on the bruise and he's gentle, tender as Alex stared at him, swallowing hard at the sight, the angle of Nigel's face made him look so handsome but then again Alex needed to remain himself Nigel was a good looking kid no matter where he was looking at and Alex looked ugly compared to him.

"So you punch the wall because of me?" Nigel asked as he carefully wrapped the bandage around Alex's hand.

Alex felt his pulse quickening, he licked his lips nervously, turning away, "Yeah I... you can say that. I'm pissed at your mum. Why did she say you can't see Lizzy anymore?"

Nigel stopped moving, eyes looking forward before flickering back down and continued working, "She only meant Lizzy isn't welcome

here anymore."

"Are you sure she meant that?"

Nigel doesn't say anything and Alex wondered what was his parents like to him. John is easy enough, he looked like a man quick to anger, possibly always cold and indifferent towards his son, maybe worse than Alex's own father and he's wondering if Nigel was never hurt by him, if he ever laid his hand on Nigel? And what about his mum, Alex thought, she seemed so strict too but in her own way. She doesn't want Nigel to see Lizzy again, because of a dead cat, but why discourage the company, Lizzy was good for him, far better than Alex ever was and plus too she was family so Alex didn't quite understand, why have him choose between a cat and her? Did she know Nigel would always choose his things, was that the reason the option was given?

Nigel snipped and clip the bandage up, his fingers looking at the blood on the cotton, completely fascinated like he was some sort of vampire. "You need more iron, the blood is too light."

Alex chuckled, "That's not much blood to make that assumption."

Nigel looked up, his head never once moving but his eyes flickering like a candle flame, "Are you disagreeing with me?"

Alex frowned and he felt Nigel holding his hand far tighter than he should, but it doesn't hurt, it was just weird and Alex pulled away, "You didn't answer my question."

Nigel moved away putting away the things, "What question?"

Alex studied him for a moment. There was a clear sign, he doesn't want to talk about it and Alex chewed the inside of his cheek and nodded, "Nevermind, what's all this?"

Nigel looked around, "It's where I come when it gets too loud."

Alex flinched, he knew what that meant but Nigel seemed to far comfortable saying it like it was expected. He quietly pulled out a stack of cards shuffling in his hands, "You should've left when you saw that I was fine."

Alex stared at him, his eyes looking up at Nigel's apathetic attitude and the cards. "Why are you so obsessed with those cards?"

Nigel said nothing, he just kept on shuffling and then he chuckled, "These cards have seen more than you and I can ever imagine." He picked up one, Jack of Spades, stared at it, "You ever wonder what our fathers do in the Order, what's it for?"

Alex shifted uncomfortablely, "Not since this summer no."

Nigel chuckled, tilting his head at him, "And yet you have such a weight to carry, a legacy, your father is cruel to keep you in the dark especially when this will be the final year before you go off to become a man, to head for Oxford, the oldies university of the English speaking world, you just know there's things not some of the regular folks are not allowed to bare witness to, to read, to learn..." Nigel looked back at the card, "But we would eventually, once our fathers are dead they'll have no choice but to reveal the truth."

Alex stared at him, "You're confusing you know that. Nothing of what you say makes any sense."

Nigel moved towards him, placed the card against his bruise hand, "You disobeyed given instructions, our parents did not wanted us to see each other or to converse, yet here you are, determine and stubborn." Nigel's eyes were heavy, an amused, dark smile curling his lips, "You are becoming Jack, soon they'll be no denying it."

Alex looked at the card then at him, "If I am Jack of Spades and Lizzy's the Queen, who's the King?"

Nigel sat besides him, leaning closer, "Luke... he's more authoritarian, decisive and intelligent but he's not a trickster like you, he follows the rules, you do not."

Alex doesn't quite know what to say to that, so he just asked, "So what is Lionel and you then?" Then he got his answer on Nigel the moment he remembered Nigel calling himself the spade, an implement for killing. His gaze met Nigel's who was smiling at him, "You're getting it now." Nigel flipped out another card, Ace of Spades, "Do you know what this represents?"

Alex shook his head, "No." He tilted his head at him, mockingly, "I suppose you'll tell me."

Nigel lowered the card, he chuckled, "With that attitude, no, not yet anyways."

Alex frowned, "Tell me."

"No, Jack."

"Tell me or I'm done playing this stupid mind game with you."

Nigel seemed taken aback, "Is that what you think this is?"

Alex shrugged, "Isn't it? From the moment I met you nothing you say makes any sense, you've been nothing but confusing Nigel. You want to pretend we are Templar Knights fighting some holy war, is that it? Or be apart of some Aurthrian Legend in search for some grail, but that's not the real world Nigel, it's not. So stop fucking with me, with *us*, before someone else gets hurt again."

Nigel frowned at him, he looked back down at the cards and suddenly Alex saw the way he looked — completely shakened, heartbroken and miserable. Alex felt like crap now, "Nigel..."

"You should leave," he whispered, turning away and moving to his desk, "I don't ever want to speak to you again."

That tore something very raw and tender in Alex's chest, he moved forward, hands out, "Nigel I'm sorry okay."

Nigel yank away his hand, "Leave, before..." He doesn't finish his sentence and it left Alex with such a riddle on his way out.

All he can do was fill in the possible blanks, wonder what it could've meant and why he was afraid to say it out loud. Alex stared at his bandaged up knuckles and braces his head against the pole of the train station, he was going home feeling completely, utterly defeated and he hated himself.

"Fuck!"

He scared a few souls on the train, they looked up at him and he stood there feeling completely exposed, he goes moving to another carriage, his head down trying not to stare at any of them as he tried to deal with his racing mind, the thoughts of Nigel and the beginning of school.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was a little difficult to write, wanted to ensure Nigel and Alex stayed in character as possible with all the changes I'm

making.

Heads up I'm not going to be posting for awhile, maybe till May 10th/11th because of the Easter weekend and I'll be busy but mostly because ACT II is sort of a mess, I'm trying to rewrite and add more stuff cause some chapters feel really weak if not all of them.

Here's my Tumblr if you wanna chat :)

Anyways thank you for reading and happy Easter! <3

Chapter 12: Act II - The Becoming

"Tell me everything terrible thing you ever did and let me love you anyways"

— Sade Zabala —

□□□□

Chapter 13: 8 of clubs ♣

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Alex stood bored in the morning assembly at the first day of school, he's tired he doesn't care much about the new young boys that were now joining the Academy, they all looked so fresh and green, youngster with no idea what's in for them, all looking completely nervous and maybe slightly distraught at the new environment.

He frankly didn't even wanted to attend elective that morning either or hear any ramblings of his teachers for each class but this was now his purgatory and he had to go through it. *Just one more year*, he thought. Pretend everything was fine cause everything was fine and he and four other kids weren't suspects to a missing person case of a sixteen year old girl.

His father was once again giving him a disapproving frown and Alex stared up at the ceiling of the auditorium wishing he could teleport his way out of there. Apart of him wanted to go back to the Manor in Scotland at least there he felt like he was his true authentic self however severely mental and deranged it may have been.

He missed the rest of the group, their constant brickering and threats and attempts at killing each other. He missed them all and he flexed his knuckles, the wound had heal but the feeling of Nigel caring for it hadn't and every thought of him touches prickled Alex's skin.

During the day he didn't pay much attention to the conversation Josh and Raj were having or any of the other boys who tried talking to him. They had asked Josh what's wrong with him and he told them it was some girl that had broken Alex's heart and it could not have been further from the truth but it was a great cover up though their relentless teasing him just made him all the more sour choosing to glare at them before storming away.

Elective had been dull and boring as expected with their teacher just lecturing them of how important this school year will be and no sort of slacking about would be tolerated, the same sort of bullshit they spew every year which made him roll his eyes only to see besides him Josh blocking his mouth with a book mocking the man it cause him to stifle a laughter.

Next had been maths, Alex thankfully had been practicing his formulas well and even been doing extra work during the last few weeks coming down to the end of this long summer — it was the only subject which had his mind preoccupied from the thoughts of Nigel and everyone else.

During recess Alex sort of felt a bit better now that he was grooving back into the usual dull routine, he's actually laughing at Josh's stupid jokes and Raj's dry witted commentary on the teachers form of lecturing. They stood outside the grounds long passage hall, Alex bracing against the concrete post as he sipped his bottle of water listening to the conversation.

"Hey look check out the new kid."

Raj turned the direction where Josh was motioning with his chin and frowned, staring with a bit of confusion, "He's the same year as us."

"Transferee," Josh noted fixing his glasses, "Well that's new and odd who'd want to come here especially for the last year of their schooling."

"Maybe he got kicked out from his old school though he doesn't seem the type to get in trouble," Raj goes on, sipping his own water, "He looks weird though, look how he carries himself. Alex what do you think?"

"I don't give a fuck about the new kid Raj."

Raj frowned at him, kicking him in the leg and Alex turned ready, raising his fist as a reflex but Raj doesn't bat an eye, "Just bloody look, you've been hacked off all morning, cheer up and stop being an arse."

Alex lowered his fist, looking at both his friends before downing his head at the concrete floor and sighinf heavily, "Fuck alright, I'm a shit friend, sorry. Now who's the guy?"

Josh motioned with his chin and Alex turned and bloody hell he was taken aback by the sight of Nigel just sitting there alone on the bench with his sketchbook drawing what seemed to be the Lady of the Rosary — a garden statue that was gated around with lilies, it stood in a small shrine was built for the student to pray to, to ask for guidance and courage, it was the only pretty thing in this bleak boarding school.

"I wonder who's he rooming with?" Josh asked, "Maybe you can find

out Alex?"

He clenched his jaw, feeling as if he couldn't think clearly not at the sight of Nigel who looked so absolutely ethereal just sitting there. Does he know Alex was right there watching him? Was this all an act to test if Alex would go up to him?

Alex didn't quite know and soon Nigel felt the gaze of their eyes and turned to look their way as they hid their faces by the post, Alex's back now facing Nigel as he grumbled, "I'm heading to the next class."

"But recess isn't over," Josh stated.

"I don't care."

They stared at him confused but with him giving no sort of explanation and only storming away before they could even asked what was wrong, they formed their own sort of conclusions that Alex was just still upset.

Alex headed straight to the Headmaster's office and not the next class he had said, he didn't bother knocking, he didn't really care. "Dad, why's —"

Alex stopped when he sees John Colbie once again, the two men having a discussion standing in the office room as he bragged in. He's stunned to see the man but he shouldn't have been surprised, "Mr. Colbie."

Nigel's father just frowned at him as he turned to Ian, "I was wrong about your boy, he doesn't seem quite respectful bragging in like that."

Ian didn't gave any sort of reply, he just moved his lips in a very much distain manner, his eyes on Alex who felt like a deer in headlights.

He blinked several times before he found both his voice and the words to speak, "I just saw Nigel and I... I just wanted to know why... why he's here? I thought he wouldn't come here after..." He couldn't let himself finish.

John Colbie nodded, "Ah yes well we had no choice really, the papers were already made before that unfortunate incident and it would take months to find a newer school and it's just one more year left."

"Yes it is," Alex replied, his heart pounding in his chest at what this could mean.

"I hope you do not mind Alex," his father goes on to say, "Nigel will be sharing a room with you. You two are already close, you both have the same interest of studies and are well adverse in your academia it's a perfect opportunity to ally yourself with someone of a liked mind as he."

Alex didn't say anything, apart of him wants to scream, yank his hair out and yell, '*Are you fucking kidding me?!*' For the last two weeks he's been trying to get hold of Nigel, only for his mother to scold him off and tell him to stay away and when Alex didn't listen Nigel had been the one to tell him to leave.

This was so... God's laughing at him, that's the only sort of conclusion he's finding.

There was also the surprise that he's sharing with someone, he's never had to, it was the deal granted by his father as half the time Alex never even left school for the summer to go to their home in the city, here was where he would stay. His dogs were new too only a year he got them his father probably saw they were useless seeing Alex would be spending most of his time in school. He did begged for them to be on the grounds, he's the headmaster son after all he should've gotten them but his father was a hard man and if he's made up his mind there's no bending him, he must've seen it as punishment, just as this was too.

Another punishment to force Alex into close proximity to befriend the boy his father so desperately wanted him to befriend and now Alex's little safe space, his room where he can be himself was being taken over by Nigel. As if his mind wasn't already plagued with thoughts of him, seeing him will make everything unbearable.

It's unfair regardless of how Alex felt for him and he wondered what Nigel thought of this, does he know, will he also loath the idea or like that he can fuck with Alex again?

"Well then," John smacked his lip, he turned to Ian, "Since everything is settled, I shall be on my way then."

The men shook hands before John gave Alex a brief look, eyes looking up and down trying to access him as Alex did the same only not as visible as Mr. Colbie, he wondered if John knew about him trying to call the house or did Helen kept that to herself. He concluded she had too because how do you explain Alex sharing a room with Nigel, it'll be hard to stay away from her son as she declared when they were so

close together now.

The door shut behind them with a click when John Colbie left. Ian Forbes went to sit by his desk, fixing his garments before pulling the chair closer, "You never heard of knocking, boy."

"I thought you didn't wanted me interacting with Nigel and the rest of the others again. That's why you've kept us away from one another, not able to talk.'

His father stared at him, "I've never kept you away, from what I've heard from the maids you were the one who yanked the phone out of the wires and tossed it across the room. If they haven't called to check in on you then they must've not considered you a true friend."

Alex felt his rage boiling, his clenched his jaw but didn't say anything. His father continued, "The summer is long gone and done, at least you've made great acquaintances that might help you in the future if the time came. Now it's time to learn, Nigel Colbie being here was something that could not be changed immediately given what had happened and so John and I just decided that did not matter, the girl is missing and you and Nigel both had nothing to do with it."

"You believe that?"

Ian stared up him coldly, "You and Kathlyn Myers have never met before until you were sent to Scotland, for Nigel it was the same. If anything it's one of those boys, Luke I'm certain that had his hands in the girl's disappearance."

Alex frowned, "You can't sit here and tell me they aren't investigating it as it's a murder."

"Don't be ridiculous, it's a *missing* case, she's missing there's no body, we can't assume —"

"That's rubbish and you know it, they assumed the *moment* they had the police going through our things, had us questioned *again* before we went out separate ways." He paused for a moment, voice calm almost like a whisper, "Are you happy now?

Ian stood up, "You went to that Manor as a training exercise, boy, I wanted to see how well you will get along with the children of our society."

"And did I...?" He stepped closer, resting his hand on the desk, glaring

into his father's eyes, "Was your experiment *successful*? You spent all summer making sure I was able to perfectly fit into their world, you had me *performing* like I was some kind of show dog, here there everywhere accumulating skills for that final test in Scotland where it all went to shit. *Was. I. Successful*, Dad?"

Ian hold his gaze, jaw clenched and Alex thought for a moment his father might strike him but surprisingly he had more patience than Alex had anticipated, taking a deep breath Ian Frobes he took his seat, avoiding his son's eyes once more as he opened his documents lay on the table, "Yes you were successful, now go your next class is about to begin."

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Alex spent the rest of the day trying to find Nigel throughout the school halls, in his class and during lunch period.

He's in a much fouler mood after that conversation with his father, barely took on what the teacher was talking about during class. And during lunch he just shoveled around his food, really not that hungry and the food didn't look that pleasing either.

Josh leaned closer to his ear, "So you found out who he's rooming with?"

Alex nodded, sipping his water, resting the bottle on his forehead to cool down his skin, "With me."

Raj snickered which earned him a glare from Alex, "What happened to the Prince who doesn't share room with commoners?"

Alex leaned back into his seat, his eyes finding Nigel almost immediately who had been eating two tables away from him with some other boys, his attention mostly on his food than at anywhere else. Alex shrugged, "Apparently his father and my father are friends so in truth he's sort of a Prince too."

Both his friends exchanged looks and then burst out laughing. "You can't be serious," Josh said, "That's a shit metaphor. What Prince? He doesn't look like a Prince."

But Alex had to disagree with that in his mind, even as both his friends mock and ridicule Nigel's appearance, his pale skin, his closed off demeanor and his strange, brooding blue eyes, Alex found all of those things deeply compelling of Nigel, they were not flaws but unique traits he enjoyed seeing on display.

He hadn't realized he'd been staring at Nigel's table until his eyes flickered his way and instantly he panicked and looked away. Raj seemed to notice but all he did was chuckled, "Does he scare you Alex?"

Alex looked at Raj, carefully accessing his words, his heart racing at how quick he was observed by his friend. He scoffed, pretending and lying, "Fuck no, he just creeps me out."

Josh chuckled, turning to look over his shoulder at Nigel, "Better keep a curifixed and garlic under your bed mate before he comes and drinks your blood." Josh hold out his hands, his tongue out, "Blah! Blah! I'm count dracula! Blah!"

Alex throwed some of his food at Josh's face, "Piss out you idiot." As they all laughed at Josh's silly jokes he glanced once more at Nigel's spot again but he wasn't there anymore, he's gone and Alex wanted to go find him, talk to him, ask him how he was.

No, he was the one who said he didn't wanted to speak to me again. Let him come to me, I've had enough of his stupid games.

And yet...

Alex did get up, asked the teacher if he could leave to use the restroom they allowed him and ran of the cafeteria fast with Josh and Raj turning around to see his frantic state. "Where the bloody hell has gotten into him?" Josh asked.

-

Alex was in his room, he wanted to see if Nigel was there too but it was empty much to his disappointment. There's not much of Nigel's except the books lay on the tables, each belonging to a field of studies, there's a blanket, a pillow and a fitted sheets folded on the spare bed and nothing else but case that sat there on the floor motionless.

Alex stooped down to opened it, a black cat eyes wide staring right up at him and he jumps, startled at first shutting the case before he opened it back up remembering the conversation shared between Nigel and his mother. Lizzy's cat — Nigel brought the fucking dead cat here along with the rest of his things he uses to create his dead collection.

How the hell did they even allow him —? Alex felt bitter, he missed his dogs again, they were gifts from one of his relatives on his mother's side who he doesn't even know the name of or their faces cause his father refuses to let him know them personally, now they were gone and Alex was faced with Nigel being allowed his pets and even though they were dead Alex hated that he got away with this.

"Do you mind?"

Alex got startled again, he turned to see Nigel there entering the room, kneeling down to make sure the cat was being properly covered up.

Alex stared at him, "That's Cleo, isn't it?"

Nigel didn't say anything, he just rest his hand on the cat and before Alex could go up and talk to him he heard his friends, "Alex! Alex where the hell are you?"

Alex immediately hurried up to his feet before they come to see him so close to Nigel. Josh poked his head through, "Ah there you are — what the fuck is that!?"

Nigel slammed the case down with a loud *blam*, Alex immediately pushed Josh and Raj out to the hall with Nigel and him locking eyes before Alex shut the door on him.

"Was that a fucking cat?" Raj hissed.

Alex said nothing, he just stood there, nervously, unsure what kind of explanation he could make.

But then Nigel came out. Alex jumped *again* as he saw the boy appearing next to him like a ghost, "Don't touch my things."

Alex frowned at him as Nigel walked passed both Raj and Josh who were looking between the two of them.

There was a momentary silence before Josh spoke up, "So what the

hell was it?"

Alex slowly nodded, hands in his pockets, blinking several times, "Yeah, yeah it was a fucking cat alright, a dead one."

They both turned to see Nigel disappearing through the halls and Raj looked up at him, "Oh you definitely drew the short end of the stick with having a roommate, Alex. None of us envy you."

"Shut up," Alex shoved him a bit and Raj eyed him, clearly offended and angry, he shoved him back and they're shuffling in the hall but Alex was grinning but Raj clearly was not.

A teacher appeared from one of the classrooms yelling at them, "Oi! Shouldn't you be in the cafeteria? What are you doing in these halls?"

Quickly they ran away, pushing each other as they made it down the halls, running out onto the school grounds laughing.

-

After classes were over Alex followed Raj to the field where they played football, allowing Alex to just sweat out all the things bothering him, he's focused on the getting whatever troubling him out on the ball cause he surely couldn't do it to another wall again.

Josh sat down by the benches eating in front of them until it was time to go visit the library where they were mostly just laughing and cracking insanely rude jokes over their history text books which made them get a few loud '*shh*' before the nun in charge of the library came up to them to gave them a penalty.

Raj looked down right pissed at that but he didn't say anything and chose to remain quiet for the rest of the time, eyeing the two best friends as they continued to snicker.

During dinner Alex looked for Nigel again in the cafeteria hall but oddly enough he doesn't see him, it seemed too cowarded, too bright and he reluctantly focus on his food before Josh and Raj noticed.

When that was all done, they snuck underneath the basement where they would hide out to read their magazines, do their assignments and exchange a few cigarettes and sweets (because those were pretty much ban in school). Alex took off his jacket throwing it on some of the old chairs as rolled up his sleeves. Josh immediately goes searching for the cigarettes and the moment Raj sees what they are up to he immediately backs out.

"Are you kidding me, it's only the first day."

"So?" Josh said through a mouthful of smoke.

Raj rolled his eyes, picking up back his coat, "I'm heading to our dorm, later."

Alex placed the cigarette between his lips, chuckling at him as Josh called out with the cigarette between his teeth, "Coward."

"Leave him," Alex replied as Raj just eyed them as he leave. "He'll be back by tomorrow."

"Yeah he can't resist us," Josh snickered.

Silence came over the two of them as Josh stared at Alex for a brief moment, looking at him carefully as he tapped the bud in a little pencil sharpener they carry with them. "You okay?"

Alex blinked, "What?"

Josh stared at him, "You seemed funny the moment you saw that boy. I know you're probably pissed that your dad, I'll be too if I were you."

Alex only gave a half-hearted smile, "Yeah well it doesn't matter, does it, I can't be angry all the time. Just tired you know..."

"Of?"

Everything, nothing. Alex couldn't really bring himself to say any of that. Couldn't bring himself to tell Josh the truth of what has been happening in his mind and even if his best friend seemed to notice he doesn't push him.

"Hey check this out," Josh said as he went and pulled out a brand new magazine and Alex started laughing as Josh flipped through it showing the pretty models in nearly nothing but revealing bikinis, "Nearly got this taken, had to hide it in my trousers."

"Gross!"

They both laughed together. Alex felt somehow better now, Josh always seemed to know how to make him laugh and lighten up his mood. He was a true friend, he didn't realize how straved he was for some light interactions till he started talking back to Josh.

"I miss you buddy."

"Where the fuck is that coming from?" Josh replied, a mixture of humor and curiosity.

Alex rolled his eyes, placing the cigarette between his lips, "That entire summer felt endless, I'm just glad it's over and I can feel like myself again." *Or at least the self I'm portraying to be.*

"Well don't be saying you miss me, ew are you gay or something?"

"Piss off Josh."

Josh laughed, shaking his head as he goes back to reading the magazine. He doesn't see Alex looking like he was about to cry as he stared ahead at the walls with the cigarette burning between his lips.

Alex came into his room late, nearly lights out, he stood there in front of his dorm feeling so worn out. He hadn't done so much in so long that he was thinking the moment he goes in to lie down he might passed out.

He hesitated to open, taking a few breaths, his heart immediately pounding, his nerves becoming a wreck as he turned the knob.

The first thing he saw was Nigel sitting down at his desk working on his many grotesque project, not the cat, this was something else, something flesh and the smell was revolting, he covered his nose and went to open the window.

"Jesus Christ Nigel, it stinks in here, you'll get sick if you keep..." He paused. *Why the fuck am I talking to him?*

Nigel didn't say a word, he downright ignored Alex and carried on cutting the what seemed to be a raven open. *He's abiding by his words, he doesn't want to talk to me. I really messed up, didn't I?*

Nigel rest his scalpel down before writing into his notebook the many findings he's discovered, documenting his work as Alex moved to his

bed, taking off his shirt and pants watching Nigel's back carefully.

Alex goes to take a shower, it's nearby on his floor so he goes in quickly, coming back to change only to see Nigel working at his desk.

Alex moved into the bed, the blankets pulled over him as he stared at Nigel's back. *Talk to me, talk to me, fucking just* ***talk to me!***

Nigel stopped briefly for a moment, Alex heart hammering so loud he can hear it defeaning his ears. He braced himself for Nigel to turn to look at him, to give him what he wanted but all Nigel did was get up and fished out something from his drawers before sitting right back at his desk continuing his work.

Alex rolled on his back, looking up at the ceiling. *This is torture*, he declared.

He can hear God laughing at him or maybe it was the Devil, either ways someone was laughing at Alex's pain and he felt ridiculous and sleep could not come any faster.

Chapter End Notes

I'm back :)

My anxiety and depression is getting the best of me again I'm really like struggling these days to get my writing done. I wasn't gonna post ACT II, the plan was to finish everything before posting but Act III is a pain, I have the first draft done but it's a incomprehensible mess and even though I want to write I'm not getting the time to do so.

So I'm just going to be just posting what I have done :)

Chapter 14: 4 of hearts ♥

Chapter Notes

Song for this chapter: Neighourhood - W.D.Y.W.F.M

"So he's ignoring you?"

Alex leaned against the wall as he stood by the phone booth watching the students behind him wait in line for the next available phone for them to use to ring whomever they wanted.

This was where Alex felt like a prisoner but he endures it all since he was used to it now.

"Don't get me started, he doesn't utter a single word to me?" Alex replied.

Lionel was on the other end of the line, he was the only one who had been reaching out to Alex since they left Scotland. Alex found it easier confining in Lionel a lot especially with all that's happened and his conflicting feelings for Nigel, he does it however as quietly as possible in case someone overhears.

"Have you tried speaking to him? To get him open up to you?"

Alex scoffed, "I've spoken to him on the first day, I'm not going to drop to my knees and beg him."

He can almost picture Lionel shrugging as he replied, "Maybe he's into that."

Alex found himself rolling his eyes. He couldn't disagree with Lionel because there's some truth to it as he thought back to the days at the Manor and how whenever Alex would cry and beg only for then to have Nigel would allow him in his arms and give him the comfort he needed.

He found it heavy to swallow, thinking about Nigel's arms, how they felt and how close they were together and yet he could not be in them or simply have Nigel be in his.

"Earth to Alex are you there?"

"Shit sorry, I zoned out."

"Thinking about him? Oh my friend I do not pity you, I know those sort of pain, it doesn't get easy, just bearable."

Alex didn't know what to say to that, he chose not to say anything.

"Don't you want to talk to him, forgo the pride and do it, maybe he'll give in."

"Of course I want to talk to him." He tries his best not to yell, hissing the words as quietly as possible. "But he said to leave him alone so I'm doing that."

"I see..."

"I'm honestly pissed off, it's frustrating, I can't bring up anything that's happened during the summer with my friends, Josh knows a bit but it's still not enough and what happened in Scotland..." He's looking around, suddenly he felt paranoid thinking maybe the phone was tapped, "I feel like I was apart of a cult."

Lionel chuckled, "Well given the whole stag thing and blood over the fire I'll say you're probably right."

There was a pause.

"Have you seen anything you know... strange?"

Alex goes still, "Luke told you."

"Everyone knows and frankly I'm freaking out too. I can't sleep, I've been taking a shit ton of medications to focus and uni here is crazy. I'm suddenly rethinking if I even want to be a surgeon."

Alex started tapping his foot, "Do you talk to Lizzy or Luke? How are they?"

"Not much only, they're in school and it's a boarding school like yours so they are in a similar purgatory but without the whole religious part."

Alex chuckled, "Sounds nice."

"If you say so. You want me to give you Luke and Elizabeth's school number?"

"Um sure I guess." He went looking for a pen, saw a boy three years lower than him had one in his shirt pocket and he fished it indicating

he's borrowing it before writing down the number on his hand.

"I'll call them tomorrow if anything."

"Alright then."

"Mr. Frobes your time is up."

"Shit Lionel I have to go, take care alright mate."

"You too."

He ended the call and handed over back the pen to the boy. "Thanks," he said.

The boy mutely nodded, passing him to go take the phone now that it was his chance as Alex stepped away and turned, walking towards the door.

The moment he pulled at it, someone is already pushing. Nigel happened to be the one, the two holding each other's gaze, centimeters apart, nearly walking into each other. Alex panicked at how close they were, looking away, moving so Nigel could pass before heading out of the door with a slam.

-

Alex seemed to fall back into his usual rebellious, misfit nature with his friends as they started to once again get themselves in trouble with teachers, always starting pranks in school, detention, sneaking out during detention cause Rev. Donaldson always ended up sleeping away before the three hours due.

They took their train rides, lighting firecrackers they actually made from materials they stole from the labs, tossing them out as the train speed on by, pulling the emergencies, sticking their heads out screaming and it's all exhilarating and Alex felt like he was now his normal self until of course he goes back into his room and he's spiraling again but it gets better, he doesn't hear Nigel in his head

even when he's right there and Nigel wasn't hearing him or at least that's what he hopes because he's not quite sure how well Nigel could read him.

Enough about Nigel, his brain is telling him as he was back on the train one night with his friends, ready to do their mischief once more until Raj looked up ahead and patted Josh by the hand, "Isn't that the Alex's roomie? What's he doing with a girl?"

Instantly Josh snap his head looking back and so did Alex and he doesn't see who the girl was but Nigel was talking to her, his head leaning against the window as he smiled at whatever she's telling him, immediately there was a twist in Alex's stomach, that gutted feeling.

"Bloody hell, he's getting himself a girl and Alex's still a virgin," Josh declared.

Alex wanted nothing more than to beat the shit out of Josh, he goes and tackled him a bit just a scare him and Raj started laughing as the two supposingly wrestled.

"Let's go introduce ourselves," Josh said pushing his glasses up his nose, "I bet she's pretty."

Raj chuckled, "I bet she isn't, maybe it's his sister."

Alex shook his head, "No he doesn't have a sister."

"How'd you know?"

The two boys looked up at him and Alex just realized what he'd said but he played it off like it's nothing, "I heard from my dad."

Raj grinned, "Come on then. Shall we?"

"We shall," Josh replied, following him, smoothening out his face and hair as Alex lingered behind, hand over the seat watching.

Josh was the first to move in and speak, Nigel looked up at him, his smile turning into a frown but the girl whoever she was seemed friendly enough, they sat across the other side of the train, leaning forward as they talked.

"We three saw you and wanted to talk," Josh said, "What's your name?"

The girl chuckled, "Three? Who's the third?"

"Our friend over there." Josh was pointing behind her and Nigel already knows he's there, he doesn't react much to the sight of him.

The girl turned and though Alex expected as much to see Elizabeth it was still shocking to see her somewhere else that wasn't her ancestral home.

Lizzy shot him a smile, waving, "Hello Alex."

And immediately his friends were godsmacked and bewildered. Alex simply sighed and got up from his seat, moving to stand there in the passage way. His friends were asking questions as Alex stared down at Lizzy who was grinning up at him. "How've you been?"

He doesn't answer her, he doesn't answer his friends but then Josh was putting the pieces together and he started patting Raj's arm, "Wait, wait, wait, is this the girl that broke your heart, Alex the one who's engaged?"

Both Lizzy and Nigel turned to look at Josh as if he's grown three heads, but he doesn't notice and Alex started wishing he had told his friends he didn't wanted to come out tonight, usually neither would go out unless he joined so there wouldn't have been a chance to see Lizzy, to make such a terrible misunderstanding, he wished Josh would shut up before he embrassed him more as he goes on asking questions if she's really a royal and now she knew Nigel and what happened between her and Alex and Elizabeth just scoffed, looking up at Alex before her gaze flickered back at Josh then at Nigel who's boiling with absolute rage.

Alex was tapping his foot, he's pissed off now. "Can you give us a second?" he said to his friends.

Raj furrowed his brows, "Alright we'll wait in the corner over there while you talk."

"No," Alex said plainly, his tone down right threatening, "Get off the train, both of you."

Josh and Raj were looking at him confused. Josh laughed, "You can't be serious —"

"Why not we've done it many times before," Alex replied, staring at them dead in the eyes.

Raj clenched his jaw and Josh chewed inside his jaw before getting

up, "Sure mate we'll leave. Train's slowing down anyways, com'on Raj let's go."

Raj eyed Alex, he didn't seem to want to listen but he gave in since Josh was willing enough to go.

"Laters man," Josh said, clapping his back and then he smiled to Lizzy, "Bye your majesty."

Lizzy chuckled, "It's actually your grace but I'll take it."

Josh eyes lit up and he looked like he wanted to stay some more but Alex gave him a look and he reluctantly leaves with Raj already halfway to the slide door.

Lizzy waved them off before they were out the door and Alex waited for a few seconds more just in case, looking out the window to see if they were truly gone before he immediately sat down besides Nigel, not caring if he's pressing close up against him or the fact that Nigel looked completely startled by the contact, or really the fact that it's been nearly a month now since he felt Nigel's touch on him and the last time was when he took care of Alex's bruise hand and now that hand was suddenly recalling that sensation and wanted to seek it out once again.

Alex did the safer thing and shoved both in hands in his jacket as he leaned forward to Elizabeth, "What the hell are you doing here?"

Elizabeth raised her brow, "What do you mean?"

"Here, here as in on this train, I've never seen you on here, neither of you for that matter and now you're here. Is your school nearby?"

"No, I'm not attending school this term," she said with a shrug, "I'm only in Yorkshire to do some business so to speak."

Alex leaned back, eyeing her suspiciously then turned to face Nigel, "So why is she here then with you if she's supposed to be with her dad?"

Nigel looked at him, glaring hard, his frown deepening to to scowl and all Alex did was smirked at him, "Yes I'm talking to you, why are you on the train Nigel? What purpose is it serving?"

Elizabeth tilted her head watching the two interaction and smiled. "He told me you've been ignoring him."

"That's a lie and you know it." He's still speaking to Nigel, his eyes never lookijg elsewhere. Nigel's blue eyes were as captivating as ever, pulling and hypnotizing, Alex couldn't help but indulge himself as it had been so long, he felt straved, his own green eyes flickered down to Nigel's lips — that classic scowl, it made something in Alex's tensed up yet he couldn't help but feel at peace seeing that pretty scowl be directed at him so open and freely.

He gives in, grabbing Nigel by the collar of his shirt and kissing him. It was shocking, to both of them he had to admit, he caught Nigel for the first time off guard and it made him happy, he's smirking as he stopped the kiss. There was now a sleepy daze in Nigel's eyes as if he didn't wanted Alex to stop, as if he too had long been straved, and truth be told Alex wouldn't have stopped if they were in the privacy of their dorm.

That's Nigel's fault, he should've talked to me sooner instead of having me wait.

Elizabeth smacked her lips; Alex forgot she was even there. He leaned away from Nigel back into his seat, sighing, "I've wanted to do that a while now."

"And what stopped you?" she asked, plainly.

Alex turned to see Nigel looking out the window, heading brace against the glass, he seem utterly hopeless and lost. Alex faced her once more pointing, "You see how he is, it can be... annoying."

"Nigel say something, would you?" she begged.

Nigel lowered his head, turning to Alex, "You told your friends Lizzy broke your heart."

Alex frowned, "That is what you're bringing up? Are you serious? I never said that, Josh is getting his words mixed up."

"But you did mention her and..." He started laughing bitterly looking at his cousin, "I told you he'll give in once he sees you, he never cared about me." Nigel glared at him, "Never."

Alex frowned, "That's not true and you know it."

"You're not Jack."

Alex was takened aback, somehow he felt hurt by that statement even

though he fucking hates being called Jack by Nigel it's still something he found himself embracing along with the rest of Nigel's morbid fascinations.

"After *everything* I've done for you," Alex whispered.

Nigel tilted his head at him, "You're wrong, it's more after everything I've done for *you*." And Nigel got, fixing his black coat before he started moving pass Alex, "I'm getting off."

"Nigel don't leave, stay, hear him out would you?" Elizabeth was begging him to come back but he didn't listen.

"It's alright Lizzy." He's walking away, too fast to stop.

"Damn it. Alex I'm sorry I have to make sure he gets back to school safe." She reached out and squeezed his hand lightly, "You'll work it out I'm sure you will."

Alex didn't say anything, he watched her ran after her cousin, Nigel pulling the emergency stop before jumping off the train and Lizzy was following down the tracks yelling at him for being a wreckless, idiot.

-

When Alex came back to his dorm he doesn't see Nigel at his desk but in his bed, sleeping.

He climbed into his own bed with a heavy sigh, placing his arm on his forehead as he looked up at the ceiling.

"I'm sorry about what I said, I'm sorry I got upset with you..."

Nigel was still, he was not moving and his back was facing Alex so he didn't know if he was awake to hear the apology. Alex turned to his side, hand underneath his pillow, "You hear me Nigel. I'm sorry I hurt you. Please just... just talk to me."

There was no movement, none and Alex just grumbled and turned

back staring up at the ceiling.

He was nearly half asleep when he felt the movement of his blankets, Nigel coming into his bed and Alex dropped his head back, half tired and half awake. He thinks he's hallucinating Nigel burying his face into his head, holding him tightly. Alex squeezed him just as hard, inhaling the scent of him, it wasn't perfect, the scent of bleach, blood, antiseptic and artemisia. Nigel was so much odd combinations and Alex enjoyed them all. He kissed the top of his head as Alex heard Nigel whispered, "My Jack... you need to remember..."

"Remember what?" Alex can barely focus, Nigel's kissing him, hands moving down on his pants and he feels a stirring, some movement and oh God he felt the heat of Nigel's tongue and he's not awake completely but he's enjoying every bit of it, bracing into Nigel's hot mouth, combing his fingers through his hair as Nigel continued unraveling him.

Finally having enough, he cursed, "Fuck, come here."

Alex pulled Nigel to his lips, they kissed for so long until Alex felt himself drifting off once more to sleep, he buried his face into Nigel's neck as he felt fingers reaching down once more storking him. He swallowed, feeling the quicken of every stroke and the sudden thrusting, his breathless and shivering moans, "Nigel..."

"Come for me Jack..."

Bloody hell Nigel should not have said that in such a manner, Alex groaned, gripping the back of Nigel's hair, kissing him, his tonuge tasting Nigel's moans. Alex quickly come but he doesn't know if it's from how sleepy he felt or the way Nigel was whisphering '*Jack*' against his lips, his ear and neck.

Alex wanted to kiss Nigel, perhaps give him a blowjob too as he's only ever seem to be the giver an not receiver but Alex felt his limbs are numb and heavy, Nigel stared at his hand, the mess Alex made on his fingers he studied before licking it clean off and fuck, Alex felt himself getting hard again.

"Nigel..." He reached out to grab him, but Nigel doesn't let him, he pulled away cleaning Alex before he goes wiping his hand.

He stared at him, the moonlight bathing him and he looked so ghostly it was frightening yet Alex could never look away from him.

Sleep came so easily, he felt his entire body sluggish, his eyes heavy and soon he's dreaming and everything was blurring together.

When Alex woke up, he actually forgot about what happened seeing how sleepy he had been when it was done, that is until he saw the mess on his pants and he looked across and saw Nigel down right ignoring him as before, putting on his school shirt, buttoning it up carefully. Through the reflection of the mirror Nigel carried a smug smirk as if he won something, before his eyes flickered back to focus on his shirt.

Alex hated that fucking smirk, hated him and yet he couldn't stop falling for it and everything else cause deep down he enjoyed the torment, it's down right annoying yes, he hates himself for liking it but Nigel, Nigel was back in his head again and this time Alex felt his mind was making space for him without his heart's permission.

Chapter 15: jack of spades ♠

Chapter Notes

> Long chapter! Took me like four days to write this cause I added so much and I was struggling a lot, I found myself slipping from Alex's pov and I did and I just said fuck it and toss everything to the fire and watch it burn.
>
> Because it was so long I'm pretty sure even with all the rereads there's bound to be mistakes.
>
> Song for this chapter: Free by Mother Mother
>
> Warning: Depiction of violence, reference to sexual assault, child abuse.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The rest of the week it Alex was more on edge than he'd ever been.

Lizzy appearance gave little to no improvement to Nigel and Alex's strange relationship if anything it was more torturous.

Nigel was ignoring him during the day and at nights as Alex would sleep he felt him coming into his bed, hands playing with his hair, kissing him, stroking him and Alex would let him have his way but Nigel never allowed Alex to touch him, never let him be the reciprocator and Alex would wondered why, he always thought maybe Nigel wasn't into that sort of thing, maybe he just didn't wanted Alex to do that to him, maybe he too was guilty thinking it was disgusting and sinful but liked doing it to Alex cause seeing it happen on another was powerful.

It was all sorts of confusing and it fucked with Alex during the day, especially when his body would immediately react to Nigel just entering a room, he shifts, avert his gaze, immediately he would become aggressive, sometimes even impulsive and volatile, dazed even like he can't hear his thoughts anymore, like he's being controlled and whenever anyone's speaking to him it was hard to focus and it would eventually piss him off cause Nigel would just be nonreactive, he would simply go about doing his own thing without looking at Alex and that itself was enough to have Alex throw a fucking fit.

It was at first unnoticeable, no one saw what Nigel was doing to Alex, they just amused Alex was in a crap mood but then it kept happening, Raj just thinks he's being an ass as usual but Josh suspects it could be more.

Since the train he noticed but didn't wanted to point it out but days turn into weeks and his best friend was off, completely off and wouldn't even want to hang out like they normally would, he would just pass it off saying he was tired, busy with assignments and studies or simply he was in no mood and head to the dorm.

One day Alex was sitting in the cafeteria, eating and Nigel nearby, a table across, perfectly angled to Alex could see his face and it was enough to make eating difficult. Josh watched him, "What now?"

Raj turned and saw Nigel then looked back at Alex, then went on to eat his food because he could not care less but Josh on the other hand pushed for answers. "You know you never did tell us why that girl was on that train with that freak? Do they know each other?"

Alex said nothing, just chewed his food and it felt like chewing sand. He bit inside his jaw, blinking, "I don't want to talk about it."

Josh frowned, looking back his food then he stopped midway bringing the fork to his lips, "Wait..." He turned to look at Nigel then at Alex, his eyes widened, "He was at Scotland, wasn't he?"

Raj continued chewing his food watching as the best friends interact, Alex simply carried on eating trying to ignore Josh who leaned forward, "How could you not tell me. You knew that weirdo from the beginning and kept quiet. Why?"

Alex licked inside his cheek, his eyes flickering to Nigel who was once just casually eating his food minding his business before he looked back at his first, "I don't want to talk it?"

Josh didn't believe him, "You don't want to or you're not allowed you? Didn't you say your dad's are friends so what, they dropped you off at that Manor and you were all there together?"

Raj looked at Josh, then at Alex, "For how long?"

"About three weeks."

Three weeks and all of that went down, Alex thought. He actually couldn't believe it.

"How come?" Raj asked.

"I don't know some death will of a Duchess was being read and Alex's father had to attend," Josh said, "Wait, does this have to do with the club you're dad's in? Or is it something else entirely? Are you sworn to secrecy is that it?"

Alex remained quiet, tapping his leg.

Raj chuckled, "What you doing preying in the guy's business if he wouldn't say anything you should just drop it."

"Thank you Raj," Alex replied, rubbing his hands on his legs, he's suddenly really on edge, he felt like a fucking time bomb, "Drop it man, I swear."

Josh stared at him, he went back to his food eating silently as Alex looked around his environment, he felt like he was going to throw up. He didn't think the nerves was because of Nigel anymore, Josh asking questions was getting him nervous now.

"So who's the girl to Nigel? Are they family or something?"

"Fucking hell!" Alex slammed his fist and by accident the whole tray of food toppled on the floor and scattered and he's hearing his name being yelled at as both Raj and Josh looked at him like he's losing it and he was.

"Alex Forbes! What's the matter with you?"

"Sorry sir I —" he's pissed and angry and his father was glaring at him as he was being scolded by another teacher, "I don't feel so good, can I just go?"

"You'll go after you clean up that mess."

But Alex wasn't having it, he felt like his mind is going crazy and suddenly he's seeing Kathlyn of all people, just standing there in the middle of the hall watching him with her head tilted, '*Alex... do you wish to join us or do you just want to watch?'*

Alex started crying, biting his arm and he ran out of the cafeteria hearing his name being called after him. His father getting up, "Boy! Come back here!"

Alex rushed to the washroom, sink and started throwing up, he found

it hard to breathe and with his head down by the sink, the pipe on he doesn't hear anyone coming until he felt the hand running through his hair, "Let it out..."

He jumped, screaming a bit as he turned and see Nigel behind him. Alex wiped his mouth, looking at Nigel as if he was some ghost, "What the fuck? What the fuck did you do to me?"

Nigel gave no response, all he did was smirked as footsteps were heard appoarching, Alex's dad coming to scold him, "Care to explain what just happened?"

He sees the vomit in the sink, Nigel and Alex and then he turned to Nigel, "What's going on?"

"He doesn't feel well sir, I think it's the food." Nigel said all soft and kind unlike the fucking monster he was and Alex eyes are wide in horror because his father is falling for him.

His father touched Alex's forehead, still with a frown, "My God you're burning up, Nigel carry him to the clinic this instant."

"Yes sir..."

Nigel grabbed hold of him by the arm and Alex was in tears he tried to pull away from Nigel grip was too tight. "Dad I'm fine I just panicked, okay..."

Nigel pulled him closer, "You have a fever let's go make sure you're alright." And as Alex got dragged by Nigel to the clinic he sees Josh and Raj running up to the scene, his father scolding them to go back to the cafeteria to finish their food but Josh doesn't want to.

He's suddenly confused at the interaction he's seeing with Nigel and Alex. He felt there was more at play, something happened in Scotland and he felt like Alex was hiding the truth of it and by the reaction he knew it could not be good.

-

Alex lay on the bed in the clinic room as the nurse checked his blood pressure, shined a light in his eyes, his fever and asked him all sorts of questions about his health.

"Have you had trouble sleeping?"

"Um... I..." Alex's eyes flickered up at Nigel who was leaning against the frame of the door watching the nurse talk to him. "I don't..." Since this week he's slept like a baby while before he always had issues but he thought it could be because of what Nigel was doing, every time coming into his bed and giving him handjobs and blowjobs but he doesn't know if it's that now, he can't really *think* clearly with the headache he's having. "I guess yeah..."

The nurse doesn't seem convinced enough, he just wrote stuff down on his pen and then ask Alex to stand up, "Experiencing any vertigo?"

Alex stood up and then he's dizzy but not so much really, "I um... I just have a headache really?"

"Well I'll write a note and tell the headmaster you wouldn't attend class for the rest of the afternoon. I'll give you something for the headache, be sure you eat something and rest, tomorrow before assembly you'll visit me and I'll see if you can go to class if you can't get out of bed — who's your roommate?"

"I am sir," Nigel said raising his hand.

The nurse looked up at him, "Be sure to check on him tonight okay, come to this office for the night nurse if anything occurs that you think needs addressing. You need your temperature check throughout the night I'll give you —"

"Actually sir I have that," Nigel cut in.

The nurse stopped, looking at Nigel through his rectangular square spectacles. Nigel smiled, "I'm in chemistry and biology."

"You'll need a clinical not a laboratory —"

"I have both."

The nurse nodded quietly, "Well then, I trust that you'll know what to look out for. Alex do you want to go to your room or do you want to stay here for a bit until classes are over."

"My room is alright I guess," Alex said, though to be honest he wished he could stay the hell away from Nigel for a bit, he just couldn't stand the smell of the clinic, it was not like how Nigel cleans after he's done working with his animals, he cleans thoroughly, deeply and making sure the bleach lingers in the air for too long, he opens up the window, have essential oils prepared in water which he would spray after he thinks the scent of the chlorine was gone, replacing it with the smell of red lavender, eucalyptus and citrus, it's always remain in the room with the faint metallic scent and Alex actually enjoyed it, it clams him unlike this very bright, white room with the high scent of cleaning agents.

"Alright then, I'll write up your excuse. You can drop it off or do you wish for your roommate to do that for you instead?" The nurse looked between Nigel and Alex, waiting for them to respond with a raise of his brow.

Alex cleared his throat, he nodded, "Yeah sure he can – you can do that for me right?"

Nigel's gaze flickered down at Alex. There was an amused smile on his lips, *you're asking me?*

"Of course, I'll be sure to tell them, we have history together so I'll inform our teacher."

The nurse looked at Nigel for a bit, remarking him oddly, "History and Science, you've got your hands full there young man."

"I try sir," Nigel replied, with a sweet smile, "I love them all."

The nurse chuckled, "Well I bet you do, carry Alex to his room would you and here, this is also an excuse for you in case you make it to class late."

Nigel nod his head politely, "Thank you sir."

Alex wanted to roll his eyes, God he could not believe the adults around him fall for this guy's bullshit but he supposed they didn't know Nigel like he did.

Nigel held out his hand, "Can you walk? Do you want me to carry you?"

Alex shook his head, "No it's fine." He got up and nearly stumbled a bit.

"Careful," the nurse said, "Nigel hold him around the waist and have his arm over your shoulder just in case."

Alex wanted to scream but they are doing as the nurse ordered and Nigel hand felt heavy by his side and the heat of his body with Alex's fever was starting to mess with Alex's senses. The nurse handed him the Panadol to take, day and night. "Be sure to take the night only *after* you've had dinner."

"What if I can't get up from bed?"

"Then Nigel will have to make sure you get something to eat."

Alex reluctantly turned to Nigel who's smiling all so amusingly at everything, "Don't worry, Jack I'll make sure you get better."

Jack... He's bold enough to call me that in front of another.

The nurse didn't seem to have heard. He's already telling the boys they can leave and once they were walking down the hall back to their room, Alex grabbed Nigel throwing him against the wall, "What *the fuck* did you do to me?"

Nigel was at first startled, but then laughed, "Jack..."

"Don't fucking call me that? Answer me. Answer me!"

Nigel wasn't shakened, he just smirked, leaning closer, very close, "No need to shout, Jack. They'll hear us."

"I don't give a fuck –"

Nigel tilted his head, "You don't? Well then I suppose we can go tell your friends the truth, about who you *really* are." He leaned closer, breath apart from kissing Alex, "What we've been doing at night. How easily you give into me?"

Alex trembled, he didn't know if it was from fear or lust and he's so fucking exhausted, his headache was pounding and he staggered back, combing his fingers through his hair, "Did you poison me?"

Nigel frowned, "Don't be ridiculous."

Alex didn't believe him but Nigel did not say anything else, he just goes and handed Alex a seal bottle of water from his side of the bed, "Be sure to rest alright."

Alex didn't say anything to respond to that, all he did was kick off his shoes and fall right onto the bed.

-

It was amazing what the body could do with rest. Alex felt better the next day and as if nothing had happened and he doesn't notice the way Josh was acting, as if he truly didn't think Alex was better even if he claimed as much.

There were more things that was bothering Josh that Alex didn't know. For instance him going to the public library and checking the computer to see online a missing report case of Kathlyn Myers, someone who disappeared after living at the Stewart Estate. Going further down the rabbit hole, Josh clicked and clicked away, finding out who the Stewarts are, the Duchess who recently passed, then he sees pictures of the funeral and he finally did get his answer of how Nigel and that girl on the train knew each other.

They were related, he saw a web picture of her in Nigel's embrace, the bottom of it described them as second cousins and he clicks reads more on the reported case, a group of teenagers alone unsupervised. It was no wonder Alex didn't say anything, perhaps something had went down he didn't wish to talk about, something to do with the missing girl's report.

All of this Alex was blissfully unaware of as he carried about his day. He didn't pick up on the way his friend act when he said he needed to go to the bathroom during their time at the library only to disappear to the dormitory hall.

Josh sneaked into Alex's dorm and sees Nigel's set up, the whole jolting sight of equipments that were set up and of the animal organs that were in jars of chemicals for preservation. He went looking through the notebooks, on the desk, nothing of importance until he came across the sketches and saw some pretty decent drawings. Some

of the school and nearby church, then there's of his friends and even himself, where he noticed Alex was depicted laughing at something.

Josh frowned at the sketch and turned the pages seeing more of Alex but they were beginning to be more detailed more refined and even more and more lewd and soon it just becomes horrid, half of Alex's face was peeled off and exposed, underneath is drawn instead, the skull of his jaw and teeth, eyeball, the bone of his nose, the tissues of his muscles, his tongue and Josh doesn't know what to think of these. For a second he thought Nigel fancied his friend but coming across these, they were freakishly horrifying, weird and disturbing.

Josh should've stopped there but instead he goes and sees another drawing one that was separated from the others, pasted so none can get to, he peeled it away not caring if it'll leave evidence that someone'd been snooping, the paper revealed a drawing of Kathlyn Myers but it's far more horrifying than he could imagine. He knows it's her, he sees the missing report images of her on the internet at the public library but here she's mutilated, her entrails out of her and she's decorated with moss and mushrooms with bugs flying around her, her heart in one hand and flowers in another.

Josh carried the whole sketchbook with him as proof, he hurried out of the room as quickly as possible unaware he was already being watched.

-

"You got time to met up tonight?" Josh asked Alex after they headed off for their next class together.

Alex touched the back of his head, "I don't know man I..."

"We need to talk Alex," Josh said, "It's serious but it can't be on school grounds."

Alex blinked, looking at Josh weird now, "Why the hell not?"

"Just say you'll met up with me tonight, yes or no."

"Fine alright yeah I will," Alex said with a shrug then proceeded to go grab the door handle only for someone else to do that for him.

Nigel appeared like a ghost, no sound, no movement, just instantly there and he pushed opened the door and moved passed them and Josh saw the way Alex looked, his jaw clenched, his eyes shut for a brief moment before he opened them back up, twitch his neck a bit before following behind Nigel.

That confirm his suspicions enough and so he felt a lot better Alex agreed to met him.

-

Josh waited by the train tracks, nervously pulling on his cigarette when Alex appeared from the shadows, hands in his jacket, he raised his chin at Josh who immediately threw his cigarette aside meeting Alex halfway.

"Christ what took you so long?"

Alex stared at Josh with a confused furrowed brow, "Relax, I had to go to the nurse to do some check ups, I'm still not one hundred you know."

Josh immediately calmed down, "Oh well why didn't you say so?"

Alex chuckled, "I'm saying so now." He squeezed himself with his elbow, the night air was getting chilly more and more they were going appoarching November. "So what you do want to talk that you had us come out all the way out here, do you want to wait on the train or just talk now?"

Josh swallowed nervously, "I rather we talk here and now."

Alex stared at him, he's detecting something wrong with his friend but he couldn't tell what, not yet anyways, not until he started talking.

Alex nodded, "Alright, talk, what is it?"

And Josh opened up, he's goes rambling about how he had picked up on Alex's mood from since the first day of school but didn't wanted to prey cause he knew how Alex would react.

Fair enough, Alex thought.

But then Josh went on, "Look I didn't wanted to say anything and then we saw that girl on the train — Nigel's her second cousin."

Alex blinked, he stepped back a bit, the gravel making noise underneath his sole of his shoes, "Wait... how do you know they're second cousins, I never told you that."

"Let me just get to that part. I know you told me to drop it, you and Raj but I got worried for you mate, you've been..." He motioned with both his hands, shaking them, "You've been acting completely strange, always angry and freaking out, you cause *a scene* at the cafeteria –"

"Cause I had a fever it got to my head."

"Yeah but something's clearly wrong. That Nigel, I bet he's the one who did something to you."

Alex froze, "What did you just say?"

Then Josh started talking about what he's been up to. How've he done the research, how he knows about Kathlyn being missing, about where she last was seen — at the estate owned by the Stewarts which he pointed out was the girl on the train's home and how he found out Nigel's related to her from a picture of them together on a news article covering Lizzy's grandmother's funeral.

Then he went on to say, "I think I understand why you are acting the way that you are?"

Alex could hear his pulsing beating against his neck, his nerves acting up, "What do you mean?"

"You didn't want to tell me cause I think you know the girl's not missing, she's dead, isn't she? Nigel did something to her?"

Alex heard his ears ringing, an overwhelming dizziness sweeping over him, panic swelling up inside but nothing had burst open yet, he needed to know more before he acted, "How – what made you think

that?"

"This..." And Josh went inside his jacket, pulling out a sketchbook, holding it underneath the orange-yellow light of the street post. Alex flipped through the pages, they can hear the tracks rattling as a train come nearer and nearer towards them. Alex was flipping through each and every page, staring at all the sketches Nigel's have ever drawn since possibly this summer. Most of them were of the group, bits of Lizzy, Luke, Lionel and what should not have been to his surprise was drawings of him. Some very recent of him with his friends, at the cafeteria and also in bed as he lay back and read. They were all quite stunning, something about each depiction, looking into a mirror he's never considered himself handsome like Nigel or the Anderson brothers but looking the drawings, he's seeing how he looked through another's eyes and he had to admit he understood now beauty was subjective as he saw through Nigel's eyes he's a pretty good looking guy.

He looked up at Josh, wondering if this is it, if this was the proof that Nigel had drawn him but Josh motioned with his chin, "It gets worse just look, I thought he fancied you but he's just a sick bastard."

Alex flipped through again and this time he realized what Josh meant and to be honest he's not at all surprise. The drawings of him half peeled away showing the underneath was as equally fascinating as the ones with him just normal, he was seeing what Nigel's imagining of his insides, the heart, the intestines, Alex passed his fingers against the sketch and wondered if Nigel did this before or after they were intimate. Alex chuckled, no wonder Josh freaked out, it was horrid indeed to an outsider but Alex knew Nigel was just strangely curious about what it was like to hold his heart, they talked about it before, he hardly recall the conversation but he was certain it happened.

Alex had seen enough, he wanted nothing more than to shut the book and scold at Josh for going through his roommate things but then Josh grabbed the book from him and pulled out a page, "This! I wanted you to see this!"

Alex frowned, holding out his hand as Josh rest the drawing in between his fingers. It was Kathlyn but the way the group had found her. Alex snapped his head up looking at Josh. "See I told you. I think he's got something to do with it and this drawing proves she's dead."

"This doesn't prove anything, Josh. You see him draw me absurdly and yet I'm still here."

"Yeah but what if you're his next victim, what if he's simply bidding time? And he's slowly planning it out. He had to be the one who's making you sick, probably poisoning you."

Alex didn't say anything, he did get paranoid at the possibility but Nigel wouldn't do that, would he? Would he actually hurt Alex after all that's happened between them?

No, Nigel wouldn't, he just wouldn't... could he?

"For the last time," Alex warned, folding the drawing in a fist, "Drop it."

But Josh kept going, fixing his glasses from falling, "I bet he kept something of hers, most killers so you know."

"Jack..."

Alex flinched at the voice coming from the dark. He turned to face it, eyes widened, shocked at the sight of Nigel stepping into the light like some sort creature of the night, his pale complexion glowing under the streetlight. He stood there quietly looking at Alex like some ghostly entity coaxing him to do what needed to be done.

Josh jumped when he saw Nigel, he didn't expected to be followed but then again what did Josh expected when he stole Nigel's things.

"Alex you think we can take him? We could you know us together makes us stronger than him."

Alex said nothing as Nigel's gaze burnt through him like hot iron though his eyes were as as icy cold blue as ever before. "Jack..." he drawl out, leaning on oneside, his hand in his long coat, "I wanted to talk to you."

Alex turned to look at him completely, still holding the sketches, "So talk. Explain this?" He held out the image of Kathlyn's dead body, "Explain why you felt compelled to draw her when the deal was —"

Josh frowned, "Hold on what deal?"

Alex ignored him, waiting on Nigel response. For the first time he sees that vulnerability again, the one that revealed itself only partially in front of his mother when he had to pick between a dead cat and Lizzy and also when Alex had insulted him for his obsession. Nigel looked completely shakened, his eyes red with tears, "I couldn't stop thinking

about her." He moved closer, slowly and Josh pulled out a fucking switch blade — *that idiot.* "Don't come close!"

That did not frighten Nigel one bit, he stood in front of Alex, his voice low and deep, "I couldn't stop thinking about how she died."

"You killed her," Alex whispered, the words escape his lips but somehow he could not believe them.

Nigel tilted his head at him, his eyes flickering to Josh then back at Alex, "No Jack..." His lips curled up into a wicked smirk, "You did."

It was like a flicker of candle fire being lit along with a thousands others slowly lighting up the darken cave of Alex's mind. The memories poured out like a broken dam, rushing and rushing, nearly drowning his senses in the process. "What the fuck is he on about!?" Josh yelled. He's panicking and that's not a good thing. Nigel eyed Alex, "Don't you remember Jack, don't you remember you coming to my recuse?"

Alex swayed his head so light he thought he might pass out, tears were pouring down he had no way of stopping them. It's all overwhelming the sudden revelation of what he had done.

I killed Kathlyn.

He stared at his hands, the blood seeming to appear as he looked up to Kathlyn standing in Nigel's place, she spat in Alex's face, "You both fucking deserve each other, bunch of freaks."

He blinked looking down to see himself holding the hunting dragger, the very same one he used to killed the buck and he's gutting her open as she's stared up at him, nails gripping into his flesh of his arm while the life escapes her.

Alex shut his eyes, the memories of that night, the truth of it all. Kathlyn found in Alex's room but Nigel had been there already and so she chose to seduce him instead.

They're fucking you know, Lionel and Alex, that's why he's not here. You can pretend I'm him, I'm Alex... Come on Nigel you're the only one who's lonely I can make it better. I can show you what's it like, teach you the real parts of a woman's body... Do you want me to invite Alex too?

Every single line was the same just as the memory Alex had fabricated. Only now he knew they were directed at Nigel instead.

Things he never remember as in that kiss he shared between Lionel, it was unexpected, something done by Lionel without warning and Alex too drunk, too stoned to really stop him until his mind realized that this was not what he wanted.

He found himself pushing away, holding his arms out, trying to breath. "I like Nigel." The words came out without much thought, they just rolled out his tonuge without care and Alex hadn't realized he said them until Lionel nodded, placing his cigarette between his lips.

"In that case you should know Nigel's been in your room for a while now and so has Kathlyn and knowing her he's most definitely not safe."

"What?"

Alex immediately got up, stumbled a bit as he headed up the stairs. He heard what was happening before he reached the room. She thought to find Alex, but it had been Nigel instead she found.

Her hands reaching to touch him, he scolded her and tried pushing her off but she's somehow stronger than him, "Come on Nigel. Such a pretty boy, so lonely, let me help you not feel so alone."

"Get off of me."

"But you want it," she said, pressing her palm against his sweatpants, "You're hard for me. Or is it the thought of Lionel and Alex together? Do you want me to invite Alex too?"

Nigel's shivering, he closed his eyes and there's tears pouring down and she coaxed him gently, "Don't cry, I'll make it all better." She tilted his head to face her and kisses him, he doesn't react or move or push her and Alex stood there at the doorframe burning with rage. "What the fuck is going on!?"

Kathlyn turned, grinning wickedly, "Alex..." She placed her fingers behind Nigel's hair, "Do you wish to join us or do you just want to watch?"

"Get the fuck out of my room Kathy."

Kathlyn frowned, "Come on now Alex."

She moved closer to Nigel and he jolts back, "Don't touch me."

"You heard him," Alex said through gritted teeth, "Leave. *Now*."

Kathlyn finally got up, picking up herself from the bed, looking at Nigel before turning to Alex, the realization hitting her, "You were thinking of Nigel as you kiss Lizzy, didn't you?"

Alex clenched his jaw, "Get out."

"So dramatic. God! I'm surrounded by a bunch of fucking fags and freaks! Such a pretty face wasted." She's looking right at Nigel her eyes glinted with a wolfish grin, "Even freaks like you deserve a good time Nigel." She tilted her chin up, "Too bad you're so fucked in the head."

Alex punched the wall near her and she jumped, startled by the impact her eyes widen, "Get. Out."

She listened, rushing out fast as Alex waited till she disappeared down the hall, he closes the door, locking it before going up to Nigel, "You okay."

"I'm fine." He avoided Alex's eyes by all means, just scowling, his eyes red as if he was trying not to cry.

"Christ Nigel you're not fine, she touched you, she fucking *touched* you and – and you *allowed* it."

He turned to Alex, "Am I suppose to fight back?"

Alex draw back, startled, "What?"

"Don't I want it?" He gestured at his erect state and Alex frowned, shaking his head, "That's not how it works. You said no, no *means* no. God Nigel..." He reached out to touch Nigel's chin, "Who hurt you?"

He flinched at the question blinking back his tears, but he doesn't say anything he just pushed Alex away going into his pocket, trying to change the subject, "I brought something for you."

Alex saw him pulling out a dragger stealthed away in a leather pouch, "It belonged to my father, something that passes down our male line... I wanted you to have it."

"Why?"

Nigel folded it into Alex's hand, eyes holding his gaze, his voice calm as ever, "Because I want you to shed blood using it."

Alex stared down the dagger then up at Nigel, without thought or care he presses his lips hard against Nigel to the point they stumbled on the bed and Alex on top of him holding him kissing him hard, intense and demanding. He tasted blood and pulled away, it's from his own and looked up to see Nigel licking his lips and holy shit, "Fuck Nigel you are so beautiful..."

Nigel said nothing he tried to get up to move but Alex was kissing him again pushing him down, his lips trailing Nigel's neck as he shivered, his fingers digging into Alex's arm, "Jack..."

Alex hummed, "Yes I'm here."

Nigel's eyes sparked like never before he's staring into Alex's green eyes, "Are you really?"

Alex smirked, leaning closer, resting his forehead against his, "Yes..." He closed his eyes and breathed Nigel in, "I want you." His fingers intertwine with Nigel's and he felt him shivering, "Can I have you, for tonight, without me having to prove myself?"

Nigel stared at him, slowly pulling away, hugging himself, "No, I – I have to go..." He tried to move again.

Alex held him back, "Don't go." Nigel tried to pull his wrist but Alex placed the hand on his face, kissing the inside of Nigel's palm and then he's on his knees, looking up at Nigel, his eyes softened, "Please stay..."

Nigel eyes widened, stunned by the request but also the way it was presented, Alex still held him, kneeling as if he was praying and Nigel couldn't help but smirked, looking down at him, raising up his chin, "You would beg, that is unlike you Jack."

"Please..." he whispered, clinging to his hand.

Nigel swallowed, stooping down to cup his face, "Jack..." His voice broke, swallowing, "Alex..."

Alex stared at him seeing Nigel looking completely shakened, "I can't..."

"Why not?"

Nigel gaze met his, a reflection of Alex's face glistening in his glassy blue eyes. He clenched his jaw, he looked like he wanted to speak but choose silence instead as if he was afraid.

"Nigel..."

Without saying anything, Nigel slowly lifted up his sweater and turned to expose his bare back, the shoulders blades bending out in a such a way Alex's vision precieved him clipped wings, he traced his fingers against the skin and Nigel shivered, there were scars but so silver that it was hard to notice until your fingers moved against the flesh. They were fresh but they exist still, old wounds that were created by someone.

He turned to look at Alex, "I scarred just as you Jack."

Alex swallowed, shaking his head, "Not like this, I don't have it like this Nigel, my dad did this to me, he hated me and neglected me, maybe slap me once or twice but never did this." He clenched his jaw, "I want to kill him, your dad."

Nigel smiled , his fingers reaching out, combing through Alex's hair, "And how would you kill him?"

"I'll hurt him just as much as he hurt you, worse perhaps, have him beg for mercy."

Nigel eyes sparked, he's completely enthralled, gazing the lines of Alex's face, resting his hand against his chest, feeling Alex's beating heart, "Maybe in time you can prove to me that you care."

"I do though."

Nigel did not believe him and Alex didn't know how he could prove it. He had so many thoughts running through his mind but Nigel stifle them all as he kissed Alex, so tender, careful, the sensation of his tongue against Alex's, the soft moans, they were lying on the floor of the room and Nigel moving on top of him, whispering in his ear, "Do it."

Alex eyes went wide, "What?"

"You want to," Nigel whisphered tongue trailing his ears, "I know you do, I've heard your thoughts Jack, don't run and hide from them. Take me as you want."

Alex swallowed, "It's... I've never..."

"Neither have I?"

They both let out breathless chuckle, Alex leaning up and kissing him, holding his forehead against his, breathing him in, "It's going to hurt."

"This is the pain I want to endure. You, Jack, with me bonded. It feels right, doesn't it? Us... Together."

Alex stared at him, his mind dazed, he's hearing Nigel's words and they were like music, soft, and melodic. He nodded his head slowly, "It does..." He wants to add a 'but' explaining that his mind was genuinely fucked right now cause of how high he was, that he wanted Nigel when he was not feeling his own flesh weighing him down like this or when his mind wasn't running laps around his head, spinning and spiralling out so many versions of this one conversation.

They kissed and Alex forgot it all except what it felt like to hear Nigel's moans, the touch of his teeth against bare skin, their shared breaths, the ache of intimacy and those blue eyes pulling him in, drowning him in a deep ocean, waves crashing and rolling, bodies quivering.

Nigel held him tight whispering, *Jack, my Jack*, driving Alex mad.

"You look completely undone," Nigel whispered as he curled against Alex's body.

Alex was staring up at the ceiling, dazed, his soul feeling a drift, "I feel undone."

Nigel laughed and the echo of it swelled a pride in Alex and he pulled him into another kiss.

A noise of something tumbling made Alex pull away, as if his body went automatic he threw off his blanket, pulling up his pants and putting on his sweater before heading for the door.

"Jack...?"

Alex didn't respond as he left and Nigel noticed the hunting dragger was gone.

Alex moved down the halls of the right wing, cautiously holding out the blade until he made it to the stairs and saw Lizzy below dragging a body down. It was Kathlyn's.

"Lizzy?"

She flinched, looking up startled to see Alex staring down at her. "Alex..."

The thunderstorm crash, there's rain beating against the windows, the blackness of the night was it up by lightning flashes. He ran down the steps and she just stared at him, eyes filled with tears, "It was... It was an accident, I didn't mean to, I swear."

Alex touched Kathlyn's neck, he felt a faint pulse but doesn't tell Lizzy that, "Go, I'll take care of it."

She furrowed her brows, "What?"

"Jack..."

They both look up and see Nigel coming down the stairs, his eyes looking at Kathlyn's bashed head then at Lizzy, "You did this."

"I didn't mean to," Lizzy said, then glared at Kathy, "She was saying things about my mother, my father and you and I... I just went mad, I just... I wasn't in control."

"Don't lie," Nigel whispered as Lizzy shakingly breathed in, he tilted his head at her, "You wanted to see her dead."

Lizzy slowly nodded, crying as she admitted it, "I'm sorry Nigel, I'm so sorry."

He held her in his arms, "You have nothing to feel sorry for."

"Nigel..." Alex voice was strong, it felt hardly like his own, "We need to get rid of the body."

"But the storm," Lizzy whispered, wiping the tears away.

"We'll wait it out but don't let anyone come into the stables. Not until morning," Nigel replied.

Lizzy gave a muted nod, she slowly walked up the flight of stairs, stopping halfway to turn to see Nigel and Alex lifting the body up and carrying it away.

Maybe the Devil contorled the weather that night, for the moment Alex and Nigel made it to the stables, it stopped and everything was calm as if no storm had passed. Alex immediately suggested they go now before it started to rain again and Nigel listened. Neither not saying much as they carried the body, deeper and deeper into the

forest.

Kathlyn stirred halfway, whatever Lizzy hit her with didn't do a quite a good job keeping her unconscious for long. She wakes up and started screaming and pushing and kicking at them. Nigel stumbled, he hadn't expected her to be alive but Alex got a hold of her, grabbed her from behind as she tried to get up to run, his hand covering her mouth while she fought him off, elbowing him and kicking at him, the wet moss of the forest floor made her slip as she tried to get up and run again.

Alex dragged her by the leg, she tried to kick and scream, fighting him off, scratching at him but he climbed on top of her, his strength keeping her down and smiles, "Who's the freak now?"

She spat up at his face, "You are! Get off of me!"

He refused to listen, she had refused to listen when Nigel told her no so why must he? Her will to live kept her fighting till the very end as he gutted her open, her eyes locking on his watching her soul fade out like a candle light.

Nigel's eyes widened but not because of Kathlyn's death but what came after. He silently stood there watching as Alex took her heart out, turning to look at him, "What was her card assigned, Queen of hearts right?"

Nigel slowly nodded and Alex grinned widely, "I knew it." He rest the heart in her palm and Nigel felt his own racing in his chest. The sight before him he could not predict yet it was so enchanting to see. Alex hands slowly decorating her with moss and mushrooms, taking his delicate time redesigning her like some sculpture. Alex turned, hands stained with blood, breath hitching, he turned looking down at the dragger then up at Nigel, "For you..."

Nigel heart fluttered, a gift, so soon, so lovely and he could not find the words to express how he felt. Alex stumbled forward, completely shakened, "You said you wanted to see me with blood on my hands well..." He moved closer and closer and his legs was slowly giving way, he collapse into Nigel's arms. "I promise," he said, reaching to touch Nigel's face, the warm blood painted on his jaw and never once Nigel pulled away. Alex smiled, "I'll protect you."

Nigel studied him carefully before looking up and face Kathlyn's body, "Oh Jack..." He cupped Alex's face, "You didn't do that to protect me, you did that for your own ego." He leaned in and rest a kiss on Alex's

lips right as he was going into a mild seizure.

Nigel panicked, he dropped him, unknowingly thought it could be the stress of what Alex had done, the guilt already eating him away in him, he cried out for Alex until he finally opened his eyes and forgot everything.

Nigel stared at Alex, angry and hurt, feeling like a fool as he saw the way Alex was weeping so confused by the lost of his memory.

"Then perhaps next time you shouldn't take anything to hinder your senses."

-

Alex opened his eyes as the memories were now fitted perfectly in each of their slots. He felt more at peace now than he's ever been before, there's acceptance there, confidence and surety. Alex locked gaze with Nigel — that electric blue eyes glinting, completely satisfied with what he's seeing — then he turned to Josh, he's remorseful, Josh had always been a good friend, faithful and loyal like dog. But some dogs needed to be put down, Alex felt the guilt but he stifled it. His green eyes staring at the blade then back up at his friend, pain in his voice and he finally spoke up, "You should've really drop it, Josh."

Chapter End Notes

So rug's been pulled out from our feet, did anyone suspect it had been Jack all along?

Sorry Josh, you had to go, I feel bad buuuttttt it's for the plot AND character development.

Also just to clarify Nigel 100% planned for Alex to have no choice but to kill his bestfriend (ikr so sick, that little fucker is evil) so if you hadn't caught onto that I just wanted to clarify it ;)

Anyways I hope it wasn't too ooc I felt like it was even if I tried to get Alex and Nigel perfectly sometimes I'm struggle.

Thank you for reading!

Chapter 16: 5 of spades ♠

Chapter Notes

> Another chapter that slips from Alex's pov, at this point I'm just tossing the chains of restraint to the fire and allowing my muse to do whatever the fuck it wants :')
>
> Song for this chapter: Mother Mother - Love to Death

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sally Rowe was not expecting a house call so late in the night, she'd been studying once again, always keeping her mind sharp for the type of job she did which was psychologist for the police department, she needed to always be on her toes, always be equipped and ready but she wasn't ready for Detective Martin McKenzie to show up so late near to midnight.

She nearly slammed the door on his face once she saw him but restraint kept her lingering, "What do you want? I told you —"

"This isn't me coming here in hopes we get together Sally," he deadpanned. Sally was taken aback but nevertheless she was pleased and to be honest a little hurt but she would not let the the midnight loneliness to kick in, she'll definitely regret in the morning.

Her eyes flickered to the bottle of wine he carried with him. She raised her brow, "Well it sure looks like it."

He smiled, looking at the wine then at her, "Yeah you're wrong. I brought wine cause what I'm about to tell you is going to need it."

He gestured to a folder in his hands and she was immediately intrigued. Looking at it then at him as he tilted head having that cocky charming smile she loves to loath.

Sally grabbed the bottle and stepped aside. "Well come on in."

Martin takes off his coat and slips off his shoes in front of the passageway before entering, he goes into the living room already quite familiar with the space around him being he'd been there before on many occasions. Sally followed behind then remembered the mess the living room was in and overtake him, rushing to pack up of the take out food lay out on the coffee table, notes stacks all over the

couches and books opened up.

He saw it still and said nothing, just gave a faint smile that disappeared as quickly as it came.

When Sally was found she pressed her lips tightly together, looking at him, "Alright, let me have a look."

Martin handed her the file, "This is officially an missing report case since this week but the time of these statements it has been just a favor for... you can say for a... friend."

She looked up at him through the bangs of her blonde hair, she noted how uncomfortable he seemed saying the words 'friend'. *It wasn't a friend then*, she thought but said nothing to that.

Sally took a seat on the couch, reading through, "What's a missing report case doing on your desk, I thought you were homicide."

"Her father already thinks she's dead."

She paused, looking back up at him, "What makes him think that?"

He slid down onto another couch, adjacent to hers, motioning with his chin, "Why don't you read and find out?"

Sally stared at the folder as she chewed the inside of his cheek. Sighing she pushed herself off the couch, "Well then, I guess the wine should be ready."

Martin smiled, "Yes it should."

She went to the cabinets, fished out two glasses, coming back to see him already opening the cork with a easy twist. When she held out the glass, he poured. "Here's a summary before you start reading. Six well privilege, rich teens were alone in a Manor or a private estate nearly over an estimated of two hundred acres of land."

Sally eyes widened, "That's pretty huge as size of a small town."

"Tell me about it and there's no one else across the boundaries, they are basically in the middle of nowhere, with the maids only coming once a week to clean up. These kids do their own cooking, their grocery are brought by the maids too and before you ask this was ordered by their parents, so if they needed anything they simply write a list and the maids will bring it on their weekly cleaning visits. There

is one phone in the entire house, they don't have access to television or simple things like newspapers they entertain themselves with horse riding, books, reading and hunting..."

Sally raised a brow, "They hunt unsupervised?"

"All well trained killers, every last one of them. Guess what they were doing when the girl went missing."

She frowned, "You're kidding, they went hunting."

Martin smiled, "One of them suggested it, Luke — that's his name, the boyfriend."

"Boyfriend?" And she goes opening the file, looking for the name, "Well if the father thinks she's already dead then he must've think this Luke had everything to do with it."

"Bingo."

Sally looked up at him, bringing the glass of wine to her lips as she drank it, "But you don't think so."

Martin smiled, "No I don't."

-

Nigel stood over the body of Josh Campbell staring at awe at the sight of his battered face before looking at the wound that was created by the switch blade in the side of his rib cage, he was bleeding to death. Eyes locking on Nigel's as he choke on his own blood because of his punctured lung. *He could live*, Nigel thought. There was still time to call for help, to save him for Alex.

Nigel turned over his shoulder and saw Alex staring into ahead holding the blade in his hand. His mind was at war with himself — that was Nigel's conclusion as he saw how defeated Alex looked, how bloody his knuckles were and how devoid his eyes seem.

For Alex this was terrible, his friend dying by his very own hands.

But for Jack it was necessary, to protect himself.

Nigel could simply tell him Josh was dead and watch Alex spiral out of control, so mad and sickening with grieve he becomes even more volatile and anxious. But apart of Nigel did pity and worry it might break him, maybe Jack was too much for Alex to handle, perhaps this should be the end of it.

"Is he dead?" Alex voice croaked. It was hoarse from all the crying he had been doing as he realized what he had done.

Nigel felt the hair on the back of his neck raise, Alex was far away but yet he could feel him as if he right there whispering against his skin, seducing him, their orbits spinning, pulling and pushing with some days Nigel in control while other days it was Alex.

Nigel tilted his head one more time at Josh when he heard the question, the boy's eyes still very much had life to them even as he spoke, "Yes."

Alex grew quiet and it made Nigel turned to face him. *Odd*, he thought, *he's accepting what he's done far too well, does that means it worked?* Nigel still was suspicious, he could never fully place in faith in Alex, someone who was so untamed and unpredictable. Kathlyn's death was unnecessary, a knock at Alex's pride and ego yet Nigel saw it as a compliment, saw the gift and accepted it though he wished Alex had been sober when he offered it.

"So what now?" Alex asked wiping his nose with his bloody knuckles.

Nigel will have to take care of those, take care of everything. He couldn't have Alex do this part, his mind would break if Nigel allowed it.

"You go back to school."

"What? And leave you!? Are you insane? What if someone comes and –" Alex stopped watching as Nigel was staring at Josh's body again. The stillness of him, as if he was Death itself coming to collect Josh's soul. He gently reached out and shut the eyes before he gave a shadow of a smile and Alex could not understand the meaning behind it.

"Why did you drew that picture Nigel?"

Nigel turned, crawling little by little towards Alex on the gravel, his blue eyes wandering over his features, taking in delicate ivory skin sprinkled with freckles, his unkept red hair, those greyish green eyes, apart of Nigel wished to paint him and another part wished to see how he functioned, his hand reach out and rest against Alex's chest and it made him startled but not move. Alex whispered, asking again, "Why did you do it?"

Nigel said nothing, he just held Alex's gaze allowing him to come to his own conclusions, *he's smart enough, he'll understand, he should if he knew me well.*

Alex swallowed, as if he heard Nigel's thoughts, "You planned this, you set this up, you gave me something, you made me *sick*, you drew those pictures, you left the crumbs for Josh to pick up on, you followed us *here*."

Again nothing escape the lips of Nigel and it was getting fucking annoying. Alex grabbed the back of his neck, pulling him closer, holding him tightly, "You're..."

Nigel smirked at him, tilting his head and moving closer, his lips shadowing Alex, "Say it, say what you want to say Jack."

But he couldn't, because if he claimed Nigel was insane and evil what does that make him, someone who had already fallen so heavily in love with him. Alex couldn't breathe, he felt like he was about to have a panicked attack and Nigel predicted as much but what he didn't predict was Alex to shove at him to the ground, his head hitting the gravel hard making him grunt out in pain. Alex raised his fist punching him hard against his face, Nigel turned grabbing his nose and Alex was about to hit again, to hurt him when he heard laughter.

Nigel looked up at him, lips bloodied as he chuckled, grinning wiidely up at Alex. Such chaos, so completely utterly wild, so in his nature to lash out when he's confused and angry like a dog who was left abandoned by it's owners, becoming a stray to survive. These results truly made winding Alex up very so satisfactory especially when the outcomes are always as predictable.

"You think this is funny!" Alex yelled, his voice defeated.

Nigel just smirked, tilting his head teasingly at him which made Alex turned away. He hated feeling Nigel's gaze over him, like he was being stared at by something that wanted to devour him, it made his skin crawl, his heart raced and his feelings were all tangled because of this

sick fucker, he hated him, hated that he cared for this fucking freak. "We're gonna be found out because of you."

"That'll never happen," Nigel whispered pushing himself up, his hand automatically reaching out for Alex.

And Alex didn't push him away when he felt Nigel cupping his face, "Even if it did I already plan on taking the fall."

Alex flinched, eyes searching his, "What?"

Nigel smiled, "Come on Jack, we both know you're thinking it already."

The colour drain from Alex's face, "I – I never..."

"You already decided I killed Kathlyn the moment you lost your memories."

"Yes cause you were standing over her body! How was I – look you're not taking the blame for anything, I won't let you."

"Too late," Nigel said and he showed the switch blade and Alex started moving around his jacket realizing Nigel took it from him sometime between him grabbing and punching him.

Alex eyes widened, "Don't be insane, Nigel we can figure this out together."

"How?"

"I'll figure out some plan, we have to get rid of Josh's body though, we have to find a way to make it –" he can't believe he's doing this, "To make it seem like an accident."

Nigel studied him carefully, "You can take the easy way out of this Alex, leave and let me take care of this. I promised to protect you."

Alex turned, "Yeah and I promised the same thing even if I can't fucking stand you anymore Nigel, I can't watch you take the fall for something I did."

Nigel expression suddenly became very guarded; Alex could not read him at all.

At the very same time the clouds burst open and rain poured down so heavily to the point it nearly blinded the two boys. Alex noticed the

blood was being washed away from his hands, from Nigel's lips even though a light brusie seemed to remain. He wanted to apologize for his outbrust but it will be redundant especially given Nigel didn't seem to care for it.

They both moved to Josh's body without saying a word to each other, placing it on the tracks as they heard and felt the noise of a train coming closer.

They chose not to linger to stay for the sight both walking away and headed back to school; Nigel was walking further ahead having his head down, the black coat he wore drench and it seemed to weigh his shoulders down.

The sulking sight was annoying Alex, he paced faster to catch up with Nigel, placing a hand on his shoulder making Nigel push him away.

Alex groaned, "What now?"

"Leave me alone."

Nigel moved on ahead but Alex couldn't let him go, "You went through all of this to make me remember and then you want me to *leave you alone*."

"That's before you told me you can't stand me."

Alex flinched, right, those words slipped out but what he *said* was not what he *meant*. "For fuck sakes Nigel I was lying."

Nigel words were soft like a wounded animal, "I don't believe you."

"People lie all the time, I lie, I lie when I don't want to be truthful especially when –"

Nigel turned to face him completely and Alex found it hard to finish his sentence, he swallowed feeling the tears trail down his cheek, the rain washing it away but Nigel *saw* him crying. "I never knew my mother you know, no one never bother asking me how I felt about her being dead, or the fact she died because of me and even when people ask it's all superficial, just courtesy, never genuine so I just reply that I'm fine, that don't need a mother... or a father. I lie Nigel cause... cause it's hard to face the truth."

Nigel stepped closer, the rain pouring and Alex realized how ironic it is that every time when he was being vulnerable with Nigel it rained

for those times. The night of Kathlyn's death was a raging storm, the only night he was most vulnerable with his true nature regardless of his missing memories.

When he realized Nigel was waiting for him to continue, to say more he just couldn't, he was still afraid. It's easy to admit to oneself about the feelings they had but to tell the person who was the catalyst for those feelings, it was insanely difficult and nearly impossible and Alex did not know if it'll make this thing between them worse, Alex kept thinking if he admitted how in love he was with Nigel, he might have to find a way to prove it, to show him or was that Jack coming to the surface again to find another excuse to kill?

Nigel clenched his jaw, there was disappointment there when he realized Alex was holding back and this time Alex didn't stop him when Nigel walked away again.

He allowed him to go leave, telling himself he'll find another less chaotic time to confess, one without murder being the center of it.

-

Sally quietly read through each of the teenagers confession, pursing her lips and every five minutes sipping wine and flipping back and forth between each page.

She finally let out a heavy sigh, rubbing her eyes, "I could see why both the father and you think she's dead."

Martin nodded, "What do you think?"

"For starters I can't make a full case study on just their statements here, I need to see them personally, talk to them but from what I've read, each of them seem to be a handful in their own way."

"Which one do you think might be responsible?"

Sally stared at the paper, licking the inside of her cheek before picking back up the folder, "None of could be if Kathlyn is actually missing

and not dead but if we're going homicide so soon I'll say logically it seemed like it could be Luke or Lizzy, cause of the blackmail and Luke's her boyfriend and Lizzy is his fiancé which is so good damn weird these are kids and we're in the 21st century why the hell – I'm getting off track..." She rubbed her eyebrows seeing Martin chuckled, she ignored that and went on, "It could be either those two but my gut says it could be Nigel or Alex cause well Alex's statement is bizarre for one –"

"He was taking magic shrooms with Lionel, the other brother who's older than every one of them but the best to set a good example I'm afraid."

"I got that already, thanks," she replied deadpannedly yet for some reason he didn't caught onto that.

"His statement about Kathlyn, what she did to him, did to Nigel actually from what I've compared, it's crazy how he hallucinated such a thing as if his own core memory rather than Nigel's then you have Nigel just going ahead with it as if he understands and not actually try to help his friend remember."

"Maybe he took it as a sort of rejection? After I left I noticed the air around them had been cold."

Sally shook her head, "No, this is some sort of game, Nigel likes the fact that Alex is presuming the role as if he was the victim, maybe he wanted to see where Alex was going with it. Maybe he knows what happened to Kathlyn."

"And it has something to do with Alex."

"Or Lizzy," she said pointing at the picture of the girl, "She admitted she and Kathlyn had a 'talk' in the kitchen but Lionel claimed he saw them *kissing* on the left wing hall so maybe what if he didn't hallucinated anything. He seemed to be pretty you know immune to the whole shrooms bit, he's had a a few times, maybe he's grown use to it."

Martin nodded as Sally just toss the folder on the coffee table and sipped the remaining of her wine, "Of course all of this goes out of the window if the girl is alive. You can't claim she's dead now it's far too early, the father seems desperate to pin this on someone maybe to avoid guilt for basically pimping his sixteen year old daughter."

He simply groan, rubbing his eyes, he's actually tired of this case and

wants to hand it over to someone else. He really should've rejected that call on his phone when he saw it.

"Someone might confess," Sally whispered.

Martin looked up at her, "What did you just say?"

"Someone might confess." Her eyes are on the statements and photos of each teen, going over everything she's just read and reread, "A group like this, there's always a weak link, you find that and you wait."

"Who do you think it is?"

Sally smiles at him, giving a one-sided shrug, "Isn't it obvious, it's the one with no strong alibi. Lionel Anderson."

Martin phone went off startling them both, he answered it and his entire demeanor changed and Sally knew who was on that call.

As he ended it she was already handing him his folder back, "Duty calls."

He let out a tired chuckle, "Yeah I guess so. Thanks for the um... the help."

She shrugged, "If you think that's help but you're welcome."

He gave a half-hearted smile, "Sally..."

She shook her head, "No, get out, you have work, what's even the call about?"

"Ugh um..." he pressed the bridge of his nose, clearly tired but tries desperately to stay awake, "Body found in the train tracks, possible murder, maybe suicide, hard to tell."

"Jesus..."

"Yeah, I'll meet what you said in mind, look out for a confession from Lionel. If I get him to talk privately it'll help so I'll try that too."

"Just be careful, these people look... I don't know who are your friends but –"

"They aren't really friends, just people my dad knew, it's complicated."

She slowly nodded, "No doubt."

They stared at each other a bit longer than usual before she broke contact and got up, ushering him out the house, "Alright, see you at work. Bye Martin."

He raised the folder and waved, heading for the door, slipping on back his shoes, "Yeah thanks again."

And he's gone and Sally stood there, she turned back and surprised she saw on of the pictures left behind, Alex Forbes. She stared at it, the innocence behind those eyes, it's hard to believe he and the others could possibly behind a girl's disappearance. "Let's hope we're both wrong and she pops up in Europe or something."

-

"Let me see your hands," Nigel said gently already reaching to take Alex's hand in the cover of darkness as Alex was just about to get into bed and call it a night.

He allowed himself to be touched and cared for by Nigel who delicately brushed and cleaned Alex's bruised knuckles, rubbing an ointment against the surface of the skin before wrapping it carefully. Alex – like before – admired the way Nigel was angled, his breathing sharpened as he took in the sight of Nigel's dark hair dangling in front of those blue eyes, his fingers delicately holding the bandage, his bruised lips upturn in a concentrated pout as he focused on his task at hand.

Alex clenched his jaw, his heart pounding in his chest, the words slipping out before he could stop himself, "I'm sorry."

Nigel looked up, frowning at him. He seemed like he was going to drop Alex's hand and run back to his side of the room but Alex grabbed his wrist, used his other hand and cup Nigel's face not caring about the bandages if they fell off.

Nigel stared at him, never once pushing Alex away even after declaring to be left alone here he was taking care of Alex after he'd been an ass to him.

They could never stop coming into each other's orbit no matter how much chaos unfolds when they do.

"I'm sorry..."

Nigel said nothing and was about to look away when Alex's fingers lightly touch the bruise on Nigel's lips making him shiver. "Does it hurt?"

Nigel just stared at him, eyes darkening, they seemed almost threatening, like any minute now Alex would be sliced through with knives but it never happened and Alex was beginning to question if those eyes were truly hostile or was he imagining things.

"I'm sorry..."

Nigel raised his chin, almost looking down at him, "You sound like broken record. It's unlike you, Jack."

"I don't know what else to say that's the issue. I feel... confuse still."

Nigel frowned, "Then say nothing and don't apologize. I don't need to hear it."

And he goes fixing the bandages, clipping it and Alex saw him heading back to his desk, turning on the desk lamp light, opening his book. "I'll tell the nurse you've gotten sick again."

Alex stared at his back, the way Nigel was writing diligently into his book, even as he did something so mundane it looked so beautiful, Alex couldn't look away. "I do feel upset, I threw up in the sink again."

Nigel froze, turning to look at him, "Do you feel guilty?"

Alex slowly nodded, "Of course I do. I suppose you don't, I bet you're happy now he's gone cause that means you'll have me to yourself, isn't that right?"

Nigel just scowled as he turned away and Alex realized he just might have made him a bit more upset. *Fuck, it was meant as a joke — a stupid joke to be honest.*

"Go to bed," Nigel ordered.

"What about you?"

He saw him smile, just a bit before it disappeared like a flickering light. "I'm not tired."

"Can you sleep with me?"

Nigel froze and Alex once again doesn't know why he couldn't just shut up and leave Nigel alone, *if he wanted to be left alone he shouldn't have come to take care of my hands.*

Nigel did not turn back to look at him, just kept writing, "No."

So be it then, he thought and silently went to bed. He covered himself up with his blanket, lying down and watching Nigel write, the sight of him so captivating and hypnotic it slowly put him to sleep.

At night he was plagued with nightmares of Josh's death replayed over and over again as he saw Kathlyn standing under the street light whispering in Nigel's ear, kissing his neck like some succubus and it made Alex sick and he's angry, yelling at her to fuck off but she's grinning as Nigel just stared at him with those intense eyes without saying a word. The dream fade and turn into Alex hurting that buck again but as he removed the blade he saw it looked ghostly pale with red eyes — nothing like how a real stag would look. He fell back horrified by the sight as it slowly it morphed into Nigel, lying there with the bloodied wound.

"Jack..." he choked out and the voice was dying, fingers twitching with the remaining life within them

Alex screamed for Nigel, jolting out of the nightmare only to be shocked at the sight of him curled up beside Alex like a fetus, his hand wrapped around Alex's arm as he had his mouth open halfway as he slept.

The sight of it look unbelievably cute, adorable even causing a whiplash of emotions swirling inside of Alex now. He felt a wave of relief wash over him as he realized it was it was just a crazy nightmare, his guilt and fears having nowhere to turn to but to his dreams.

The bruise on Nigel's lips was still there and that made him felt so shitty even as his heart calmed down. His mouth tasted dry, his knuckles hurting underneath the bandages. He lay back down after sipping some water, his arm gently going over Nigel to pull him closer

to him. His skin cold compared to the heat of Alex's body, his scent much tamer, smelt more like old books and artemisia which was an odd clash of scents but Alex loved it anyways.

He relaxed as he felt Nigel burying his face closer to his side, throwing his arm around his waist, muttering something he can't quite understand because of how low Nigel's voice was but Alex tried to listen.

Nigel was talking in his sleep, chanting the same time over and over like some ritual.

"Don't leave me..."

"Nigel..." Alex felt his heart racing. *Who is he talking to?*

"Don't leave me... My beloved Maracela..." Alex swallowed, jaw clenched, Nigel clinged to him as if he might sob, "Please don't leave me..."

Alex shifted his weight, bring Nigel to rest his head onto Alex's chest, he leaned down and planted a kiss onto Nigel's hair, holding him tighter in his arms, "I wouldn't leave you..."

Alex felt suddenly ridiculous, for all he know Nigel could be referring to someone else, someone who probably meant more to him. The thought was painful but Alex felt the self torture was punishment for hurting him today. He shouldn't have lash out, sure Nigel didn't wanted his apology but he still felt terrible and that guilt morphed into such a nightmare with the sight of Nigel's dead body lying there after Alex wounded him, it was so bloody horrifying he couldn't get the haunting images out of his head.

"I promise you I'll do better next time, you don't have to worry I wouldn't leave, I'll stay. I'll stay, I'll stay..."

He said those words till they faded out, feeling Nigel clinging to him tightly as if he could hear Alex, maybe he could, maybe he couldn't but it sure helped Alex slept much more peaceful knowing Nigel was there and they were both comforting each other. Even as the world around them was falling into a mess, Alex felt contented with him in his arms like this.

Chapter End Notes

Once again thank you for reading, do have a lovely day <3

Chapter 17: 3 of spades ♠

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The funeral of Josh Campbell was gloomy, sad and pensive.

All around Alex he was seeing tears of love ones, heard their cries, their plead as to why he was taken from this earth so soon. Josh's mother was the loudest while his father was completely silent, not single tear was shed as the thing he did was stare ahead looking at Alex as they placed the body into the ground while the Priest delivered the final prayer.

The police ruled it out as an freak accident, they know Josh and Alex and many other boys would try to jump from the trains and would even throw fire crackers and play pranks with the fire alarms. There was no way it could be murder, no one thought that though some did question why Josh was alone. Raj spoke up and said he was supposed to meet up with Alex but Alex claimed he never showed up, that he had a relapse feeling sick again and Nigel took care of him so he never showed up.

Nigel truly planned everything, the excuse was so good that the guilt in Alex made him exhibit a high fever which the nurse ruled out as him not giving his body proper rest and let him stay out of class for another three days. As for the bruise knuckles, Nigel even found a way as one would see in the boys bathroom a dent in the wall and if asked Alex was just pissed he was falling back in school, he was angry about Josh's passing. No one questioned anything more of it.

But Josh's parents blamed him still, of course they were right. In Alex's mind he felt his mind being spilt into two, one grieving the lost of his friend the one who blamed himself for not seeing him, not having his back and having him fall out of that train, the one who cried when he heard the news and the one who stood over the grave hole with a tear trailing down his cheek as he wiped it before it touch the ground. Then there was another one who was just quietly passive, no display of emotion and just one singular thought that '*it was necessary*'.

That voice sounded so unlike him and yet it was him, he looked up eyes on Nigel who stared solemnly at the casket as it was being carried down.

They hadn't been vocal with each other since that night. They never brought up Nigel sleeping in his bed until morning or that he's gotten back his memories or anything really.

It was a week of being quietly observed by one another.

He stared at Nigel's demeanor during the funeral session, he looked sad but that's how he always seemed, he was hardly a boy who smiled and the only times he did was always a unhinged moment.

Alex thought Nigel would approach him to gave a public display of condolences but he hadn't. Their fathers however talked though while the two would both stand there quietly watching the other, it was rather odd and uncomfortable interaction given everything that's happened.

As the last flowers fell onto the casket the men started reburying while one by one everyone slowly packed away and leave. Alex felt his father's hand resting heavily on his shoulders, not uttering a single word before he too disappeared. He hadn't comfort his son on the matter of his dead friend, Ian didn't seem to care though one would argue the headmaster did allow him another week without needing to attend class even after he was clearly feeling better.

Alex was now alone watching the dirt over the buried casket, they couldn't show the body, it was a closed during the funeral so that means the last person to have seen Josh's face was Alex and Nigel and that would stay forever with Alex – the sight of Josh choking on his blood as he slowly realize while dying that he had never quite knew Alex.

Down below the hill of the cemetery, across the road was an observer, standing by his car holding small bird view binoculars, watching Alex while he was in deep thought.

After a moment he felt someone come up from behind him. Patting his shoulders before moving around him and standing on his left. "Funerals, am I right?" Luke pulled out a cigarette and flickered his lighter, inhaling before exhaling, his blue eyes staring down at Alex with his chin raised, "So terrible... your friend."

Alex said nothing and Luke handed him the cigarette which he took not caring if his father saw or anyone else for that matter.

As he exhaled, he felt a sudden calmness flood over him, a relief that it was over. *Was it over though?* Kathlyn was still 'missing' and Nigel

was still Nigel, still staring at him with those cold ice blue eyes and brooding upturned frown, once again Alex was reminded it was never over with Nigel, not until he said so and he wasn't speaking to him choosing now to lock his mind from Alex so he had no clue what Nigel was truly thinking and that made his breaths become shaky again.

Luke noticed and he rested his hand on Alex's shoulder again, "Hey you did what you had to do."

Alex turned to him, "You know?"

"Of course I know, Lizzy told me and she found out from Nigel." He gestured to the second cousins who were standing not too far from John and Ian who were once again talking, Nigel having his head down staring at the grass as Lizzy stared at Alex and Luke with a somber expression.

When he locked eyes with her, Lizzy turned and whispered something to Nigel's ear who looked up and met Alex's gaze and somehow that interaction made Alex blush and look away.

"Nigel..." Alex said turning to look back at Luke, "He drew a picture of Kathlyn, how we found her and I... I couldn't just stand him and let him be blamed for that."

Luke nodded, "I know..." He squeezed his shoulder, "You did the right thing, you were protecting Nigel, protecting Lizzy and the rest of us."

Alex tilted his head at Luke, he had no idea, not a single clue it seemed. Luke seem to think it's Lizzy. He would be right in the sense cause Alex even lied to her. He finally realized from the beginning Luke had suspected Lizzy, had tried to protect her and probably even wanted to frame one of them for it all.

Lizzy and Nigel appoarched them within that open silence. She hugged Alex, whispering condolences in his ear, gently smiling at him and lightly squeezing his shoulder even after they all know he was the murderer of his own friend, "How are you feeling?"

Alex just frowned, looking around them, "Where's Lionel?"

Nigel's shoulders tensed up but Alex ignored him as Luke replied, "He couldn't make it, studies and whatnot."

"Does he know?"

"What? That you killed your friend?" Luke stared at him hard, before cracking the most malicious smile, placing a new cigarette between his lips, "No, he's taking Kathlyn's dead hard as is." He lit it, "It's hard you know given who is he, sure he cares for Lizzy and the rest of us, but what happened is fucking with his morality." Luke eyes rested on Lizzy who stood there watching the two of them interact, she's frowning at her boyfriend who just tapped the cigarette remains on the cemetery grounds, returning her frown with a scowl, "What?"

She lifted her chin, "I suppose you blame me for everything, don't you?"

He scoffed, resting the bud back between his lips, "Not everything is about you Lizzy."

She scowled and just out of spite grabbed the cigarette out of his mouth and stepped on it which made him just sigh heavily looking between Alex and Nigel then at back at his girlfriend, "I see I'm not needed here now anymore since the three of you are together, I shall be on my way. Good bye Alex."

Alex said nothing, just nodded, destroying his own cigarette before Lizzy snapped at him too. As Luke walked away Elizabeth anger seemed to reach a boiling point, she down her head, running her fingers through her hair looking like she's about to scream or maybe cry. "Are you alright?" Alex couldn't help but ask.

"No," she said, then turned to him, her eyes wandering to Nigel then at Alex, "He doesn't call, I've been in England these months and he's just ignoring me and worse of it he speaks to Lionel about Kathlyn, always about fucking Kathlyn. *Fuck* why are boys like this, they only care about the chase, never about the prize! God! Not that I want to be a prize but Luke is an ass I want to kill him!"

Alex chuckled, "Don't say that."

"Why not," Lizzy replied, her eyes flickered to the road, "You think I care about that detective?"

Alex turned and saw McKenzie looking there way and he doesn't hide it. Alex just frowned turning his back on Lizzy, "Luke thinks it's you?"

Lizzy nodded, sighing heavily, her breath is misty from the cold air, "Well it is me, Alex or have your memories still a bit foggy. I thought you said he remembers everything Nigel."

Nigel said nothing as Alex slowly shook his head, "You're wrong it wasn't you that killed her."

Elizabeth raised a brow, "I bashed her head with one of my dad's small statues and I grabbed her before she bled out on the carpet floor placing her in a guest room, and then I dragged her down the stairs — you *said* there was no pulse Alex."

He leaned closer to her, feeling Nigel's eyes burning through the back of his skull, "I lied."

Her eyes widened and she looked at Nigel who slowly nodded, his voice low and deep, "It's true."

"What the fuck Nigel!?" She looked back up at Alex then at Nigel before her eyes landed back on the detective. She had to calm herself before he sees how panicked she was, "You *lied* to me."

"For the record I thought it was Nigel," Alex said to her.

"Not you, you idiot!" she snapped at Alex, "I'm talking to him." She walked up to Nigel, grabbing his coat, "You were gonna set me up for him, weren't you?"

Nigel smiled, "To be fair cousin both Lionel and Luke think it was you that killed her, even you yourself."

"But they are *wrong. I* was wrong."

"Very..."

She searched his eyes, glaring at him before letting go and sighing heavily once more, "Fine... then let it remain so." She turned back at Alex, who stood there straight, his expression blank waiting for her to snap at him again but all she did was go into her pocket, taking out a card.

"What's this?" he asked as he took it.

"My lawyer, he's not the same as my dad's, he's my personal one I got him after I found out about my mum." Lizzy rest her hand on his shoulder once again looking up at him, "You call him if things become a bit too tangled here." She turned to Nigel, "And for fuck sakes stop with the games Nigel and just talk to him. I'm so done with the two of you." She pointed up at Alex's face, straight to his nose, "You *need* to get your impulse under control, sooner or later this is gonna blow up

in our faces. I would prefer not to see either of your pictures in the newspaper."

He pocketed the card, trying to control his smile, "Thanks Lizzy."

She shrugged, "Yeah whatever." Her eyes wandered between them one last time, "I'll be going the two of you need to talk alone." She looked back at the detective, "He probably suspect one of you, I guess we need to throw him off of that."

"I'm coming up with something," Nigel whispered.

And the two of them look at him not sure what to make of that, what could he possibly mean and Alex wondered if this was about Nigel taking the blame of what Alex did, to be his scapegoat but they already had this discussion Alex would never let him do it.

"God I'm fearful to find out what you mean by that," Lizzy replied, she reached out pulling Nigel into an awkward embrace before leaning and Alex thought she was going to whisper something in his ear but she simply kissed his cheek and smiled at him, "Take care okay."

He nodded and Lizzy turned to Alex, smiling at him as she just patted his chest, "See you around Alex, I'm sorry again... about your friend."

"Yeah thanks..."

He watched as she left them, surprised she didn't kiss him too but he suppose she already knew how Nigel would react and thank the heavens she had the common sense for that but still, he felt somehow jealous at the sight of a girl kissing Nigel's cheek even if it was his second cousin, his stomach twist and jealousy was like a double edge sword ready to cut him too as he wielded it.

Nigel stood there in silence watching Josh's body before Alex finally turned to face him, his eyes wandering to the detective before looking back at Nigel who had his head down, frowning deeply to himself.

"What do you have planned?"

He didn't say anything and Alex once again grew restless and annoyed. He leaned closer, not even caring if anyone saw (even if there was no one in sight except the detective, he still felt like someone would). Alex lifted Nigel's chin, making him look up at him, "What are you planning, Nigel?"

"I can't tell you yet."

"Why not?"

"Cause you're not ready?"

Alex frowned, "Haven't I done enough? Jack is already here."

Nigel's eyes sparked like bright blue flames, "Not yet, there's still more to be done."

God, I'm so tired of him. Alex sighed, leaning closer, finally asking the question that's been bothering him, "Who is your '*Beloved Maracela*'?" He said it with such distain, there was a bit of jealousy there, he couldn't possibly think Nigel would have someone else he wanted for that role, a grotesque role of a lover that dies only to become intimate with after the body has been long buried.

Nigel flinched at those words looking up at Alex, blinking as if he hadn't heard him right, but again he was quiet. He turned away frowned, "The cards have spoken."

"Again with the riddles, Nigel." Alex cupped his face, "Can't you stop being delusional for one second and tell me the truth, tell me how you feel?"

Nigel furrowed his brows, "How I feel?"

Alex felt like he was being stabbed, he swallowed hard, "I like you or haven't I already confessed that enough, haven't I gifted you..." He trailed off not wanting to say something before the detective read his lips, "Nigel at least be honest with me. With yourself."

Nigel eyes widened, he pushed Alex's hand away as if he just seen something horrific, panic painted on his face before he suddenly in a blink of a second composed himself, glaring at Alex, "No..."

"No?"

Alex raised his brow, then scoffed, "What the hell does that mean? No?"

"I can't have feelings for you," Nigel spat which shocked Alex more than he could ever fathom. He dumbstruck by this, he thought all the time it was him that was being stubborn but it seemed Nigel too was struggling. "I can't love you."

"Why the hell not? I get it's wrong but we've done a lot of wrong and I'm still trying to figure out how I'll tell my dad — Nigel!"

He tried walking away from the conversation and Alex reached out and grab him, Nigel pulled away his hand, "Let go of me."

"Why are you being this way? I thought you liked me, why the hell did you wanted me to do these things if you didn't wanted me to prove myself to you."

Nigel looked appalled as if he hadn't considered that, "I wanted us to be bonded as equals, allies against the war."

"War? Are you hearing yourself. There's no war, Nigel, no enemies to fight, why did you do those things then? Why did you pretend...?" He saw the way Nigel was blinking, as if he hadn't considered any of those possiblities or perhaps he didn't wanted to face the truth. The realization of everything was enough to scatter Alex's heart, how could he be so blind to this fucking freak, "Did you just simply do it as a ploy, for your games."

"It's not a game."

Alex chuckled bitterly, "Oh is it, it most certainly *is* and I'm not playing anymore, I'm done, you hear me, done, for good this time."

And he had walked off, passing Nigel their shoulders bumping into each other before he stormed out of the cemetery. Luke and Lizzy were standing not too far from the gates, they both called for him while he ignored them as he went for a walk. Detective McKenzie lowered his binoculars when he saw Alex appoarching him, hands in his pockets.

"You've got some nerve," Alex spat at him, glaring hard at the man.

Martin just studied him carefully, watching the boy before resting his hand over the roof of his car, "Trouble in paradise? Your dad saw you two by the way."

Alex flinched, "What?"

Martin smirked, "He saw, but I suppose he won't believe his own eyes until you come out and say the truth."

Alex tilted his head at him, scoffing, "What does that have to do with anything."

"You're protecting him, aren't you?" Martin said, with a shrug, "You like him, he doesn't like you and yet you're protecting him. Tell me what happened with Kathlyn or to your friend Josh, you can be honest with me Alex, I'll ensure you are safe from him."

Alex frowned, spatting out the word, "Honest..." He stepped closer, stretching his hand over the roof of the car, holding the detective gaze with a glare, he smirked wickedly, seeing how the detective look so utterly uncomfortable. "I'm already honest with you detective, Nigel didn't do anything."

"You lied about what Kathlyn did to you, how can I believe —"

"I know, I know," Alex raised his hand in defeat, "I got my memories back recently about that night."

Martin raised his brow, "And?"

Alex gave him a cold look, "You're right to suspect Kathlyn's dead but he and I aren't the ones who killed her."

Martin leaned closer taking the bait, "Who did?"

Alex smirked again, hitting top of the car, before stepping back, "You're the detective, figure it out."

Alex walked away as he heard the man call back to him. He chose to ignored him, crossing the street and continuing on with his walk until his head was clear.

Chapter End Notes

> And we're officially done with Act II dear god that was hell to write and rewrite and reread. I struggle to just make sure the last three chapters were sufficient enough. I hope you liked it :)
>
> Song for this chapter Mother Mother - Oleander I chose to add it at the end cause it'll feel like those end credits song. It even foreshadows what's gonna happen next but I feel like we already know what's gonna happen :)
>
> I'm gonna take another pause before I post ACT III so I'll see you in probably around June 28th/29th hopefully (I wanna finish this before Sandman release cause I know for a fact once that's out I'm

gonna get hyper-fixated on that and this will not be finish around the time I intended it for).

If you want you can add me on Tumblr@222quinn there I try to be active always reblogging fandoms I'm currently in, if you wanna chat about this fic or Like minds in general or anything really I'll love to.

Anyways that's it thank you for reading, hope you have a great day and until next time!

Chapter 18: Act III - My Beloved Maracela

Jealousy
jalousie / jealousy
"A sentiment which is born in love and which is
produced by the fear that the loved person prefe
someone else" (Littré).
The jealous man in the novel is not We
midt, Frederika's fiancé, the bad-tempe
JOKER

folie à deux

Chapter 19: 8 of spades ♠

Chapter Notes

> Hello everyone I know I promised to post the remaining chapters since June and it's *checks calender* October.
>
> The end notes will explain more, for now do enjoy the opening of ACT III :)
>
> Warning: depictions of violence and gore.
>
> Song for this chapter - Digital Draggers - Heaven or Hell

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Everything seemed to blur together now. Nigel had changed dorm — much to Alex's disappointment — after a deep discussion by the Headmaster (Alex's father) and Nigel's parents. Alex couldn't help but think of what the detective had said about his dad seeing Alex and Nigel interacting near Josh's buried body, did he do this because of what he saw or did he suspect Nigel might have something to do with Josh's death?

Whatever it was it made things a bit harder for Alex.

He agreed to no longer be apart of Nigel's games yet he couldn't get the fucker out of his head. Their interactions still were so little but their wired thoughts were always being sent across to each other during lectures, in the hallways, standing in the auditorium and even when Alex was in bed alone. He hears Nigel as if he was whispering in his ear, hand pressed on his shoulders, '*Jack*...'

Alex would wake up startled from dreams, his hand involuntarily reaching next to him thinking Nigel was there, the coverings were always so cold to the touch, he hated that so much.

He told himself he could get over Nigel and his crazy fantasies, he told himself he can move pass and pretend but even as he phone Lizzy, Luke or even Lionel it's hard to not want to bring Nigel up, to ask them if they had talked to him, to hear their opinions on Nigel's strange fascinations of cards and the knights of the templar.

Alex felt alone when it came to his confused state he was currently in, unable to talk about Josh to anyone and Raj stopped talking to him

entirely mostly because they were never really friends to begin with and he wondered if Raj thinks Alex had something to do with Josh's death. Did he know Alex was supposed to meet him that night because of what he found on Nigel?

Trying to talk to the head counselor – some Reverend of the church nearby – it would feel more like being in a confession booth rather than a therapy session and Alex would have none of that, he didn't need God right now, not when he had committed so many sins and he was certain the heavenly father abandoned him the moment he declared he was in love with a boy, especially one like Nigel.

No Alex tried to deal with the revelation of his feelings as logically as possible, he threw himself to his studies — though he was failing at that which was disturbingly odd to the point it annoyed him. He also put his name down to assist in the upcoming play that was being collaborated with the Sansley College students just to take him mind off of everything.

Even with the return of his memories exposing he was a murderer one would think his consciousness would eat away at him especially with Josh but inside of him, the darker side was winning; Jack was there now beating Alex down, wearing him out, waiting for something, someone else to show up for Nigel's games to begin again.

In the end Alex was determined not to let that part win, he said he had enough and he'll stand by that.

Fuck Nigel and his tales of botherhood and the cards and his beloved Maracela.

Fuck it all.

-

"Who is she?"

Alex was left stunned as he heard the question being asked by Lionel

over the phone. He did not see the shock on Alex's face as he asked the question.

"Come on tell me," he repeated chuckling, "Who is she?"

Alex goes quiet for a moment, eyes wandering around him as if expecting Nigel to pop up somewhere. He leaned into the phone, "Why do you assume it's a *she*?"

Lionel chuckled, "Because I know you Alex, you said not a word of Nigel these few weeks and you've never once fallen for *my* charms, I'm assuming you'll pick the easiest distraction — a girl of course to have your mind wander off to."

Alex breath hitches, he felt exposed, "So because I didn't fell for your charms you think I'll fall for a girl?"

"I most hundred percent think you'll fall for a girl and not because you didn't fall for my charms but because of Nigel – hear me out before you end the call —" Alex was actually considering it, "— what do you hope to gain out of this, hmm? Don't you remember how he reacted to Lizzy and you, he almost made Luke drown you."

"Funny," Alex whispered, having his arm stretched over the booth, "I don't seem to recall."

"This is not a game Alex, he's possessive and *you know it*, don't do anything stupid you hear me."

Alex clenched his jaw, gripped tightened around the handle of the phone, "I hear you." He paused a bit, noticing his time was up, "And there's no one okay, no one at all."

Lionel seemed like he was about to say something else, maybe tease him by calling him a liar to which he would be right but Alex cut the line, ending the call immediately and stepping away from the booth.

-

There was someone who was distracting Alex from thoughts of Nigel and what had happened to Josh and Kathlyn and every other fucked up thing he felt had happened since the start of the summer till now.

It was... a tame distraction.

Just a stupid crush he'd develop cause of this one girl's acting named Susan. Mesmerized by her ability to capture the character even if the set design was ridiculous and lacking taste, he fell for her cause she pulled him away into a fantasy just for a little bit until he blinked and remembered he needed to be elsewhere.

There was times he felt Nigel's presence around, the play was taking place at the church right nearby of course and Nigel would appear as it was opened for the students to come and pray and reflect or even assist in the organizing.

Nigel did none of those and Alex knew this because he'd seen him sit on the pew in front of the statue of St. Anthony of Padua and sketch in his little black book with a sort of crease of his brows, full of concentration.

Alex would pretend to ignore him and continue to help string along the decorations for the play, somedays he would sit and wait to see if Nigel would come to him as he took a seat on the pews facing the altar but he never did and that made Alex sort of bitter though he rather chew iron nails than to admit it to outloud.

One afternoon after Alex was finished with class he arrived at the church rather earlier than usual, the echo of his footsteps sounding heavily in the quiet halls, he noticed someone kneeling praying before the altar whispering to themselves.

Alex froze in place when he realized it was Susan, too stunned to see her so she was deep in prayer just as she lifted her head she spotted him before he could admit he hadn't been staring. Her eyes opened wide immediately hiding her rosary, blushing red, "Sorry, I –"

"No, no I should be the one..." he cut in, then paused staring at her, taking her in quietly. She was pretty with soft gentle features, painfully shy as she carried herself with such innocence Alex was almost afraid to talk to her out of fright he might taint her with his own sins.

"You look pretty when you pray." The words slipped out before he could even go over them in his mind and he saw her eyes widened shocked at the statement.

"I'm sorry..." he nervously tug his ear, downing his head in a slight blush, "I shouldn't have said that, I should – I should go..."

He turned to leave but she stood up, calling back to him, "Wait!"

He halted, turning around to see her blushing as she gestured to the bench, "Do you want to sit with me as I finish? We can talk before..." She sheepishly smile, her cheeks tainted with a pinkish hue and Alex couldn't help but delight in the thought he was making her this way. He chuckled, shy himself, "Yeah sure."

But then he stopped the moment his hand touched the polish wood, feeling a sudden overwhelming presence, his head snap at the corner and my god Nigel was there and he hadn't seen hin cause of a post blocking the view of that side of the church. Nigel was not moving, his dark eyes staring coldly at Alex before glancing down at a book he was carrying.

"Alex?" Susan pulled him out of his thoughts but he no longer felt confident to pursue her, not when Nigel could see everything. He simply stepped back, shaking his head, "I'm sorry I have to go, please, enjoy your prayer." He ran to the back room of the church, running in the far corner near the window, staring out at the field of grass as he willed himself to be brave enough to confront Nigel, to explain he had not meant to say those words to her.

I don't owe him nothing, he and I are done.

Are you?

Alex flinched at the invading thoughts, the moment it happened he felt something against his skin, his neck. Nigel held a sword, of course it wasn't a real sword but simply a prop though it still sent Alex's stomach plunging, cold sweat already forming against the side of his temple. Nigel was close, too close, whispering against his ear, making his skin crawl, speeding up the plusing of his heart race.

"Betraying me now, Jack."

Alex turned, eyes meeting Nigel darken, wicked gaze and all he did was play the fool smiling and pretending away, "I don't know what you're talking about."

Nigel cocked his head to the side, eyes moving up and down before a smile twitched at the corner of his lips. Alex braced himself for something, he wasn't quite sure what but he had to be on guard in case Nigel once again invaded his mind.

Instead he shook his head, muttering something under his breath before smiling at Alex, this time the smile was more... pleasant, "I have something for you."

Alex frowned when Nigel showed him a red book, the one he had been staring at just now as he stood in front of the saint. He handed it to Alex, "You should read it." He looked down at the text, it was oddly familiar to the red book like what Lizzy's father had in the library in his studies. He sees Nigel when he glanced back up, a wide, pure, ecstatic sort of smile that had Alex on his toes, he leaned in closer, "The answers you are searching for are in there Jack."

Alex took the book, opened the few pages but then stopped when he remembered he promised he was done. He glanced up, "Why now?"

Nigel was silent, he always remained silent when he didn't wanted to admit the truth.

Alex stepped closer, hands reaching for the sword Nigel was carrying and when he realized what he was doing, why he was doing it, it was so easy to fall into Nigel's orbit, so easy to want him and fear him all at the same time, perhaps that says more about the kind of person Alex was within.

Nigel lifted the sword once more, the point of the blade pressing Alex's larynx as he swallowed hard. There it was again that little smirk forming slightly against Nigel's lips before it turned into a wicked grin, "I know what you're doing?"

Alex found himself shrugging, "Enlighten me... what *am I* doing, Nigel?"

Nigel lowered the sword, "Read the book and we'll talk afterwards." He reached for the back door, hand on the knob before stopping and Alex saw the facade crack, Nigel was now appearing vulnerable before him, "Do you fancy her?"

Alex was actually taken aback by the question, he hadn't expected Nigel to be so forward yet so unshielded, his jealousy was something that spark a thrill within Alex, he should hate it but he revelled in it instead, "Yes... I think I do."

His blue eyes seemed clouded, like a rageful storm was passing over them and immediately he swung the door open and slammed it shut. Alex felt his very own mask crumbling down, he leaned against the table, nails digging into the wood as he lowered his head staring at the book before him, his heart never truly settling down as he opened back up the pages, his fingers wandering over the similarities of Lizzy's own back at Scotland.

The tales are the same, just written by in a different style and ink and the traces of bloodlines hidden from the outside world, the truths of what happened throughout history. Alex finally understood why Nigel was obsessed with such a legend as well as the cards, he believed they were guiding him to this path he was taking, he believes this path will save him, grant him power and strength.

Alex slammed the book shut, dismissing the tales cause that's all they could be, tales and myths to make the past seem beautiful and magical when it was was bloodied and choatic and mudane just like the present.

-

"I think I've gone mad," Alex whispered into the phone.

A chuckle sprung up on the head piece, deep, low and sarcastic. "And what lead you to believe that, hmm?"

Alex glanced around him, before whispering, "I'm convinced Nigel is fucking with my head, more so than any of us and I..." He licked his lips, "I think I know why but..."

"You're too afraid to face it?"

"I'm not afraid, Luke. I'm just..." Alex closed his eyes, taking in a deep breath, "I'm logical, I'm practical, I see it as what it is, it's bullshit and _"

"You're gonna fucking break Alex just you wait," Luke whispered.

Alex felt cold suddenly, "What?"

He can imagine Luke smirking over the line and that made what he said ten times worse. "How the fuck *am I* going to break when I'm doing what *he wants*?"

"You're not doing what he wants you're doing what you think he wants and that's different."

"Then what am I supposed to do?"

Luke breathed in, a short pause as he thinks and Alex heard a tapping in the background, probably from his fingers or possibly a pencil, "Let things run it's course. You said he wants to be the spade, right?"

"Right..."

"Then let him be the spade, the pike, whatever the fuck he's been calling himself and maybe then you might understand what kind of person he is."

Alex nerves were raising again, somehow that didn't sounded like a good plan but what choice Alex had, he couldn't go to anyone and tell them the truth, the truth would require him exposing the lies he've hidden and that would put the entire group in danger.

"Don't fucking break Alex, you hear me."

"Why is that so important to you?" Alex couldn't help but ask.

Luke chuckled, "Because we're all breaking and cracking apart here, all of us somehow, Lionel's been ignoring my calls — spiralling more out of control by the minute with those stupid nightmares he's been having, Lizzy has become so indifferent and cold much more cruel than I've ever seen and I... I *feel* it... *in me,* something. I don't know what it but something just sprung out of nowhere that moment Nigel told me my role, my place amongst our group."

Alex felt his heart racing, "And you rejected it?"

Luke chuckled, "No, of course not why the fuck would I? I accepted it rather too fast I think, maybe that's why I was okay with it all." He coughed and grunted; and before Alex could say anything he's hanging up, "I gotta go, tell me if you've got in touch with Lionel next time we talk okay."

"Okay..." The line went dead too soon.

-

"Susan..." Alex called, he nervously tried not to make it seem like a big deal as he just called her so loud in front of her friends while she was leaving.

She stopped, turning to face him, "Hi Alex..."

"Um... about the other day I didn't – I'm sorry if I got a little..." He forced a smile, how can he say this without sounding too weird.

"It's okay," she replied, smiling back but it was more genuine than his. She went into her pocket and pulled out the rosary she was praying with before, holding it out for him, "I think you should have this."

Alex stared down at it then at her, "I – No, no I *can't*..."

"I think you need it more than I do," she goes on, then reached out for his hand and rest it in there, pressing the cross into his palm and for a moment Alez thought it would burn him. "I heard about your friend, I'm sorry." She blushed shyly at the reveal that she knew more about him than he thought. "I thought... sometimes it helps, you know, to pray, it certainly calms me so maybe it might help calm whatever is going on in you."

Alex was not entirely sure where she was going with this but it was too raw, too tender. He hadn't realized she was this intuitive and empathetic, he suddenly felt exposed, afraid she might indeed become tainted by him. He shook his head, "I can't –" There was movement, a shadow by the doorway and Alex instantly had his eyes looking at the corner wondering if he was imagining it. He took the rosary, smiling down at her, "Thanks, I'll make sure to try it."

She nodded, dropping her hands awkwardly to her side and was ready to leave when he held her back by the wrist, "Do you want to go somewhere later perhaps?"

Susan turned, eyes widened, a nervous smile once more, "Uh yeah sure, I'll – I'll love to."

He grinned at her, "Where would you like to go then?"

She thought of it, "They're running some Hitchcock classics at the old Astra. I think tonight it's Strangers on a Train."

"Oh, what time is that?"

"We're getting there about 7:30."

"'We'?"

"Oh, well, if you prefer not to go with my friends..."

"No – that's all right. No, no, no, that...that would be...that would be awesome.That would be great." Alex forced another smile, his heart hammering hard against his chest, he feels like he's being watched or maybe it's the paranoia.

"So," she grinned up at him, "I'll see you there, then?"

He nodded, "Yeah, you bet."

He watched her as she walked off, still holding her rosary. The red and golden beads, absolutely beautiful, what was she even thinking parting such a gift to him.

As he stared at it he suddenly remembered something, shoving the rosary into his pocket and picking up the boxes and leaving the back room hurriedly.

-

Alex arrived later after seven to see no one was there waiting for him. He tried to get a ticket but the booth was sold out and so the only option he had was to go back to the school.

Alex did felt terrible but also maybe it was for the best, she would've been just a distraction from everything that's happening. She was too good for him to hurt like that though he'll admit he would actually get off on that; but this time... perhaps this time it's all for the best he ignores her especially with Nigel hovering around.

Nigel, Nigel, Nigel, God damn it that guy seriously was rooted into his mind, was it love truly or was it something else?

Alex kept on walking and he found himself wandering towards a path he never took before when heading back to school, yet here he was hiking up hill making his way near the tiny green house. His mind still wandering around the name Nigel that Alex practically summoned himself near the bastard.

There inside the greenhouse the little light bulb was clicked on, he was in there and he was doing *something*.

Alex had to see, had to know, he wondered if this is where he brings his pets before he carries them back to the dorm with him, the greenhouse was practically abandon near the church due to the climate, it was nearing winter, the chill too cold to plant anything for it to live and so perhaps here was where Nigel uses to slaughter his birds and cats before he headed back to his room.

Alex walked in not sure what to expect and he certainly was not expecting to see Nigel standing over a human body. Susan, lying on top of the wooden table, she's conscious and trapped.

She sees Alex, her eyes widened and she makes a soft squeak of a sound which made Nigel turned to the direction she was staring at. Alex flinched when they made eye contact, somehow Nigel was not surprised to see him. He's holding the hunting dragger with his gloved hand, the very same one Alex used to kill Kathlyn and it was the gift Nigel took back from him.

Nigel's eyes softened with a smile, "Jack..."

Alex shivered, stepping in carefully, heart thudding against his ripcage, Susan is completely naked, her wrist and ankled bonded by zip ties. He sees the tools lay out, all for the purpose of extracting her insides out, without a word he goes up to the scalpel picking it up, eyes avoiding Susan's, the guilt there but he wouldn't feed into it, he couldn't for the sake of not breaking like he promised Luke.

She was sobbing through the taped mouth when she realized he wasn't

there to recuse her.

Alex turned to Nigel, calm as still water "What is this Nigel?"

Nigel sheepishly smiled as if he's suddenly embarrassed by the reveal of being caught and Alex stepped closer, "How did you get her like this? What are you going to do with her?"

He's no longer smiling, his face turned somber, eyes darkened, "Why Jack you wanted this, why else am I here?"

Alex flinched, eyes flickering to Susan for a brief moment before meeting Nigel's gaze again, "I didn't *want* this. I was messing around, she's *nothing*, I never meant..."

Nigel moved closer, the dragger in his hand and he rest it against Alex's chest, the point piercing through his shirt, "*You* wanted a reaction, well here it is." He leaned closer, blade still pressed against Alex's heart, he swallowed as he felt Nigel's lips against his ear, "I'm gifting you her, she's who you want, I'm making sure she's prepped and readied to be taken."

Alex glanced back down at Susan once again, this time holding her gaze and she was struggling against the zip ties, her words muffled but it was clear she was begging for her life.

Good God she's seen his face as well as Nigel's, it was too late now, too late to stop the madness and maybe that was Nigel's intention.

Maybe he already worked his way into Alex's mind to see even *he* didn't want to stop the madness surrounding them either, this sick part of him — he's accepted it, it's long been guiding his thoughts. Jack wanted Susan but he wanted to see Nigel being the one holding the blade, proving himself he'll kill for him just as he promised, just as Jack would for him.

Alex scoffed at himself.

I thought I was done with his games, turns out I'm the one orchestrating my own.

Nigel leaned away, eyes searching Alex's, "There you are, Jack. You've been hiding." He caressed his face gently, "I've missed you."

Alex leaned into his touch, shivering underneath his cold palm, he tried to beg, "Don't hurt her, let her not feel the pain, please..."

Nigel scowled, and without a warning he goes into Alex's pants pocket and pulls out the rosary beads glaring at it then at him, "You really did fancy her."

"Nigel..."

He was like a hurricane – wild, dangerously choatic; he tossed the rosary aside, leaning over Susan with the dragger in his hand, he gently caressed her face as she tried to flinch away. Angrily he grabbed her hair, plunging the blade right underneath her rib as she tried but failed to fight back. He shakingly ripped her open with the blade, a thorough and clean cut and he pressed her down, holding her gaze as the life slowly fades from her eyes, until she stops fighting and takes her inevitable doom.

He stroked her gently the moment the life goes from her, caring only to be tender now that she was a corpse. With his tools in his hands, he begins creating the perfect replica of Kathlyn's dismise, gloved hands slowly untangling her entrails and Alex could not look away, for the life of him he could not. Susan's head flopped to the side, her dead eyes were staring at him, the image of his motionless posture was reflected back at him through her pupils, forever scaring his memory.

Blood was all that he could smell, so high it numbed all his senses, his ears ringing, his heart pounding. What has he done? What has Nigel done?

Nigel did not care for the mess, for the first time he seemed to embrace the chaos as Alex did when he became Jack.

And something in Alex clicked.

This was his own baptism, nearly everyone had chosen to become the card that they were assigned to, Alex being Jack of Spades, Lizzy being the Queen, Luke the King and now Nigel...

Ace of Spades.

Death.

When it was over Nigel turned around, shivering as he admired the crimson blood against his hands. His blue eyes locked gaze on Alex with the most deranged smile he'd ever seen Nigel wore.

He slowly pulls off the gloves and discards them, his eyes are wild, he's daring Alex to say something now and Alex couldn't find the

words. Before him was a monster so beautiful it hurts. Alex could not look away, his pounding heart so loud it drowned the sound of his spiralling thoughts.

Too overwhelmed to move Nigel took the first steps forwards him, "Jack..." There was pleading in his voice, hesitance as if he thinks Alex must have hated him now for what he'd done.

Alex could not and that was the problem.

"This is so wrong," he whispered, tears forming in his eyes but they never fell as Nigel reached out to touch the tiny bits of hair near his ear.

"Have you read my book?"

Alex grimly nodded, shivering underneath Nigel's touch, "I have but I want no part of it."

Nigel leaned closer, lips shadowing his, hooded eyes looking up at him, "It's too late Jack... Far too late."

Alex found himself leaning into Nigel, the magnetic pull far too great for either of them. Hands mirroring each other, holding one another, foreheads touching, Alex felt himself whole in this moment. "I didn't wanted her dead."

"Yes you did," Nigel whispered against the crown of head, "Yes you did, Jack."

Yes I did...

"What if we're found out? They already suspect me, they suspect you too, I can't let that happen?"

Nigel stared at him, "I know Jack... I know you won't..."

Alex didn't know what he meant by that.

Something was so wrong. He couldn't pull away from Nigel's embrace, it felt like a snake stifling it's victim, full of love, full of hunger, full of hate.

Alex grabbed him hard, fist full of hair as he pulled Nigel closer to him, lips pressed tightly against each other to the point it ached.

"Tell me why you did it?" he said breathlessly between each kisses.

Nigel growled, not saying anything but Alex couldn't help but smile, "I know why you did it."

Nigel blue eyes sparked, a hint of that devilish smirk, "Do enlighten me then?"

"Maracela. You are obsessed with that myth. You want me to chose someone. Just like Luke and Lizzy but Nigel..." Alex cupped his face, stroking it gently, not caring about the blood getting on him, it was apart of them, the violence, "I have already chosen someone."

Nigel seemed stunned, confused, a bit excited, "Who?"

Alex allowed his finger to trace Nigel's lips, blood touching there too. "It's you," he whispered, "I choose you."

Nigel eyes goes wide again but this time he's rejecting it, he seemed upset but Alex couldn't allow him to pull away, not this time, not ever. Alex yanked him closer, another hard kiss, forcefully allowing his tongue to lick the blood off of Nigel's lips, to taste it from his mouth, he pressed his hand hard against Nigel's waist, ensuring he doesn't pull away and Alex felt him gramicing but he isn't fighting anymore, it becomes a frenzy between the two. Alex kissing him, Nigel kissing him back, the intensity blurring their surroundings of the gore around them.

Alex was pushing Nigel against the table, pressing him against the wood, pulling that apron off, lifting that shirt off as Nigel did the same, pushing the jacket off Alex's shoulder, raising his shirt over his head, his lips were on Alex's neck. "Jack..."

Alex shivered feeling that sensation of Nigel's teeth and tongue trailing against his body.

They already had there first time together but this, oh this was much more different. Alex had all his senses with him this time, he was very sober to know this was his choice entirely, there was no lust, no want just *need*, he needed Nigel no matter how deranged he was he couldn't see a reality without him, no matter how damned, how sinful, he couldn't go a day without this bastard in his head.

"Fuck Nigel..." He felt the words on the tip of his tongue as he felt Nigel pressing against him, both of them hard. "I should make you more jealous."

Nigel looked completely vicious, ready to hurt again just by that

statement, he was panting, his fingers gripping Alex's hair with a gentle tug with a comand voice that made Alex'sknees weak, "Don't." His kisses were determined and ruthless causing Alex to become just as desperate and breathless as he was.

Alex fingers are going for Nigel's belt and he pulls away but Alex was ready for him, holding the back of his head, locking gaze, "Trust me..." He guided his fingers carefully down, feeling Nigel stiffened under his touch but he was no longer pulling away again. Alex's lips brushed against Nigel's ear making him shudder, "Let me be the one to serve you this time."

Nigel grabbed his wrist, a disapproving frowning, "That's not your role."

"I want to do it," he replied, pulling away his hand, so very determined. He goes down on his knees just to prove it and they both knew Nigel could not reject the sight of Alex like this, the fire dancing in his eyes were evident enough that he wanted this just as much as Alex wanted to give it.

Alex was already holding his length when he looked up again, "Please." With such soft words whispering right against his tip, Nigel swallowed hard, allowing Alex this once. Alex gently pulled the skin away from the head of his cock, tonuge already anticipating the taste, already eager to savour him, he licks gingerly at first, feeling Nigel quiver underneath him, his breath hitches as he gripped Alex's hair.

That reaction alone boasted Alex's confidence, he eagerly licked and stroked, looking up to see Nigel bracing his hand against the table, eyes shut, brows furrowed, he seemed still unwilling to enjoy himself but Alex would not let that be. He shamelessly devoured him, wanton overpowering him as he proved to Nigel how much he wanted to do this, how eager he was to serve him, saliva dripping from his lips, mouth grasping for air, in this position he's never felt so in control his fingers stroking his scrotum, "Come for me, Nigel."

That command awoken something in Nigel like never before, he gripped Alex's hair, the moans filthy and provocative, his body shaking and his head falling back, "Jack..."

Alex moaned over him, in reply, moving faster, harder until he tasted Nigel hot on his tonuge.

It was the first time Alex has ever done this but embarrassment be damned as he savoured it all before taking Nigel lips again.

Alex determined to make that memory he's skewered become reality, he takes Nigel against the table, feeling the blood and saliva, the pain, pleasure, all mixing as one as he's curses against Nigel's tonuge, feeling Susan's dead eyes staring at them.

Wrong so very wrong and terrible and damning but Alex could not care in that moment.

Their rhythms were in sync, holding each other and never untangling and Alex was far too gone to think coherently, his tongue so very lose, his mind not his own, "I love you Nigel."

Nigel stared back at him, if there was shock on that face Alex could not see it, all he saw was Nigel complete entralled and breathless as he was, asking the question, his fingers gripping Alex's hair, "You promise me for eternity?"

Alex flinched at that question, was this the response to his declaration of love, was this Nigel's way of reciprocating. Alex nodded, "Yes for eternity."

Nigel buried his face into Alex's neck, holding him as they both came together, heaven's doors shut and the gates of hell opening.

"Then it's done," he whispered, "Just as it was written."

Chapter End Notes

So a lot happened. I posted an explanation on my Tumblr here

With regards to this story, I really do apologize dear readers but House of Spades might have to go on a temporary hiatus cause my phone crashed and the data for chapters I was redrafting did not sync to my laptop and so I basically have to start over and I'm really just disappointed.

The plan was for this story to finish by November after I realized I couldn't finish it in August.

I was really struggling to write these last chapters due some of the dark themes and after losing them now it's so very disheartening especially after I put a lot of mental pressure to get it done.

This chapter was the only one that was saved cause it was written a while back, chapter 17 was done and I was halfway through 18 when I got back my groove and shit went to hell.

I wanna cry but I can't cause I'm so numb :(

Anyways this isn't the last you'll hear from me. I promise I'll be back, I just need to give you guys an explanation as to why I went m.i.a and why the ending is taking so long.

I need to return to this project like it's new and I can't do that as I'm grieving the lost of the chapters I had written (it's other stories too I was writing as well so I really fucked up big time thinking they were all backed up).

Anyways that's all really.

I ask you for your patience and understanding.

See you again and hopefully soon ♡

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!